GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

WEDNESDAY
MAY 18, 2016

The Public Meeting of the District of Columbia State Board of Education convened at 441 4th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20001, at 5:30 p.m., Jack Jacobson, President, presiding.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

JACK JACOBSON, President
KAREN WILLIAMS, Vice-President
D. KAMILI ANDERSON, Ward 4 Representative
TIERRA JOLLY, Ward 8 Representative
MARK JONES, Ward 5 Representative
MARY LORD, At-Large Representative
RUTH WATTENBERG, Ward 3 Representative
JOE WEEDON, Ward 6 Representative
LAURA WILSON PHELAN, Ward 1 Representative

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

HANSEUL KANG, State Superintendent
JOHN-PAUL HAYWORTH, Executive Director

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES:

BRIAN CONTRERAS
DESTINEE WHITTINGTON
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Adjourn
P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

5:31 p.m.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Good afternoon.

The time is now 5:31 p.m. on May 18, 2016, and this meeting of the District of Columbia State Board of Education is now called to the order. The roll will now be called to determine the presence of a quorum.

Mr. Hayworth?

MR. HAYWORTH: Mr. Jacobson?

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Present.

MR. HAYWORTH: Ms. Williams? Ms. Williams?

Ms. Lord?

MS. LORD: Present.

MR. HAYWORTH: Ms. Wilson Phelan? Ms. Wilson Phelan?

Ms. Wattenberg?

MS. WATTENBERG: Present.

MR. HAYWORTH: Ms. Anderson?

MS. ANDERSON: Present.

MR. HAYWORTH: Mr. Jones? Mr. Jones?

Mr. Weedon?

MR. WEEDON: Present.
MR. HAYWORTH: Ms. Jolly?

MS. JOLLY: Here.

MR. HAYWORTH: Mr. Contreras?

MR. CONTRERAS: Present.

MR. HAYWORTH: Ms. Whittington?

MS. WHITTINGTON: Present.

MR. HAYWORTH: Mr. President, you have a quorum.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Hayworth. A quorum has been determined, and the state board will now proceed with the business portion of our meeting. Members, we have a draft agenda before us. Are there any corrections or additions to the agenda as presented?

(No audible response.)

There being no corrections, I would entertain a motion to approve the agenda.

MR. WEEDON: So moved.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Moved by Mr. Weedon.

MS. LORD: Second.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Second by Ms.
Lord. Also, Ms. Wilson Phelan from Ward 1 has
joined us. The motion being properly moved and
seconded, I'll ask for the yeas and nays. All in
favor, please say aye.

(Chorus of ayes.)

Any opposed?

(No audible response.)

The motion is approved. Next on our
agenda is approval of the minutes from the May 4,
2016 working session. Are there corrections or
additions to the minutes? The corrections
offered by Ms. Wilson Phelan have been
incorporated already -- the additional
amendments.

(No audible response.)

Hearing none, I would entertain a
motion to approve the minutes.

MS. WILSON PHELAN: So moved.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Moved by Ms.

Wilson Phelan. Is there a second?

MS. JOLLY: Second.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Second by Ms.
Jolly. The motion being properly moved and seconded, I ask for the yeas and nays. All in favor, please say aye.

(Chorus of ayes.)

Any opposed?

(No audible response.)

The motion is approved.

Good evening. My name is Jack Jacobson, and I am president and Ward 2 representative to the State Board of Education.

On behalf of the members of the District of Columbia State Board of Education, I want to welcome our guests and our viewing public to our Wednesday, May 18, 2016 public meeting. The state board holds its regularly scheduled meetings on the third Wednesday of every month, here in the Old Council Chambers at 441 Fourth Street Northwest. The members of the State Board of Education welcome your participation and your support in our efforts to improve education in the nation's capital. The State Board of Education has been working closely with our
friends at the Office of the State Superintendent
of Education this year to ensure that the
District takes a holistic and comprehensive
approach to adjusting our statewide
accountability plan to comply with the new
federal Every Student Succeeds Act.

The state board is taking the lead on
making sure that the community's voice is heard
in the development of a plan, and within a week,
we will be announcing community meetings across
the District to ensure that all of our parents,
students, teachers, and community members will
have the opportunity to speak with state board
members and their neighbors about our shared
vision for successful schools.

I want to thank Superintendent Kang
and her team for their commitment to that
involvement, and I am excited to announced that
the state board has created another avenue for
residents to be involved in this process. On our
website, sboe.dc.gov/ESSA, we have added a survey
in English, Spanish, and Amharic that will help
us understand exactly what our residents think is important for us to consider as we develop the statewide accountability plan. Please note this is the beginning of our conversation. This plan will allow us to determine which schools are successful and provide supports to the schools that are struggling.

Tonight's agenda includes recognizing four outstanding District of Columbia students. The state board is grateful that the students and their parents could join us here tonight to celebrate their remarkable achievements. I also want to note that our FY '15-'16 student representatives will soon be leaving us for college.

Their input has been vital this year, and we are now accepting applications for the 2016-17 student representatives and the student advisory committee. The application can be found on our website at sboe.dc.gov/studentvoices. We are also very much looking forward to hearing from Deputy Mayor for Education Jennie Niles on
school modernization and facilities, including the reports of lead contamination in District schools. I know that the deputy mayor and her team have brought the full resources of the District government to bear to ensure that our students are safe, and I want to thank her for her efforts. We look forward to hearing more about how her office is ensuring student safety across the District. We're now moving to ceremonial resolutions. We will actually first hear from the state superintendent of education, Hanseul Kang.

SUPERINTENDENT KANG: Thank you, President Jacobson. My remarks will be very brief, but thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Hanseul Kang. I'm the state superintendent of education. Tonight, I just wanted to congratulate, in advance, the students being honored this evening for their accomplishments and look forward to hearing more about what you go on to do in the future.

Secondly, I just wanted to note that
all of the State Board of Education members, I think, have been invited and are aware of this event, but just wanted to flag it one more time, that this Friday, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education is excited to host the Second Annual D.C. Educator Awards Dinner, from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m., which is a reception we're holding in honor of the D.C. teacher of the year, the D.C. history teacher of the year, the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science teaching finalists, and other excellent educators across the District. We look forward to seeing some of you there, hopefully.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you, Superintendent Kang, and my apologies.

Now, ceremonial resolutions for our students. Tonight, the State Board of Education is honored to recognize four students who embody the word excellence. I would like to invite Noah Kravitz, Rachel Page, Colby Bosley-Smith and Rachel Snyderman to come to the table at the front of the room.
There are four chairs here, if you could all just come forward. Take your seats while we talk about your achievements briefly. The state board will consider the resolutions in two blocks, first the delegates to the National Youth Science Camp, and then the District's U.S. Presidential Scholars. I'd like to ask our at-large member, Mary Lord, to introduce the National Youth Science Camp, and this year's D.C. delegation, and to read the resolutions into the record. We will then ask Ms. Snyderman and Ms. Bosley-Smith to discuss their experience with science. Ms. Lord.

MS. LORD: Thank you. Mr. Jacobson, would it be all right if the members who represent the wards that these two scholars hail from read the resolution, so I don't have to do all the talking?

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: If they're prepared to do so, we would welcome that.

MS. LORD: Okay, thank you very much, and thank you, everyone, for being here tonight.
It is my distinct honor and pleasure to have
served as the state selection committee
 coordinator for the National Youth Science Camp.

This is an unprecedented opportunity
for our young scholars of science, technology,
engineering, and math to participate in a
prestigious science education program in the
beautiful rolling hills of Bartow, West Virginia,
all expenses covered. They do science
experiments. They hear lectures and seminars.
They take fieldtrips to the radio telescopes, and
at some point, they come back to the District of
Columbia to hobnob with Capitol Hill congressmen,
the head of NASA, inventors like Dean Kamen, who
created the first robotics competition. In
short, it's a big, big deal, and I am thrilled to
be able to present the outstanding members of the
Class of 2016, one from Capital City Public
Charter School, one from Wilson High School, who
will be representing the District of Columbia
with peers from around the country and around the
world this summer in West Virginia. Thank you.
PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Now, Ms. Wattenberg and Ms. Anderson, would you like to read the resolutions into the record?

MS. LORD: Ms. Anderson is still looking for her resolution. Honoring Rachel Snyderman, "Whereas, two graduating high school seniors each year are selected to represent the District of Columbia at the prestigious National Youth Science Camp in West Virginia; whereas, the National Youth Science Camp, which offers the opportunity to exchange ideas, study science, and participate in outdoor learning experiences with peers from around the country and the world is granted to students who have exhibited leadership and outstanding scholastic achievement in science and mathematics; whereas, Rachel Snyderman of Ward 3 will represent the District of Columbia as a delegate to the 2016 National Youth Science Camp in West Virginia this summer; whereas, the State Board of Education notes that Rachel Snyderman has excelled in science and mathematics throughout her high school career at Woodrow
Wilson High School; whereas, Rachel Snyderman has been an honor roll student throughout her educational career, as well as an AP scholar with distinction, and will attend Brandeis University to major in physics; whereas, Rachel Snyderman is a member of the varsity crew team, concert choir, and the Wilson Singers Jazz Ensemble; whereas, Rachel Snyderman also serves as a social justice advocate through the Wilson Human Rights Club, Operation Understanding DC, and Youth Action Health Council; whereas, Rachel Snyderman's interest in astrophysics and the universe were cultivated through a 2014 internship at the National Air and Space Museum, an engineering camp at the University of Maryland, and her AP Physics C course; therefore, be it resolved that the District of Columbia State Board of Education recognized Rachel Snyderman for academic excellence and honors her as one of the District of Columbia's most promising and creative young science leaders in the high school graduating class of 2016."
Can I just say -- Rachel lives near me. Rachel went to Sunday school with my daughter in elementary school, and then they were together at Deal Middle School. I have known Rachel since she looked very different and was much littler. It's really wonderful to see you all grown up and to see what you've done with the education that you've gotten in our schools. Congratulations to you and to your family out there.

MS. SNYDERMAN: Thank you.

MS. WATTENBERG: Colby Bosley-Smith.

Honoring Colby Bosley Smith, District of Columbia delegate to the 2016 National Youth Science Camp, "Whereas, two graduating high school seniors each year are selected to represent the District of Columbia at the prestigious National Youth Science Camp in West Virginia; whereas, the National Youth Science Camp, which offers the opportunity to exchange ideas, study science, and participate in outdoor learning experiences with peers from around the country and world is
granted to students who have exhibited leadership and outstanding scholastic achievement in science and mathematics; whereas, Colby Bosley-Smith of Ward 4 will represent the District of Columbia as a delegate to the 2016 National Youth Science Camp this summer; whereas, the District of Columbia State Board of Education recognizes Colby Bosley-Smith for excellence in science and mathematics throughout her high school career at Capital City Public Charter School; whereas, Colby Bosley-Smith is an all-star athlete on the varsity volleyball and basketball teams and statistician for Little League games and basketball games at the Jelleff Boys and Girls Club; whereas, Colby Bosley-Smith was chief editor of the yearbook, member of the Bike Club, and member of the newly formed Science Club that meets to discuss scientific literature with a retired physicist; whereas, Colby Bosley-Smith has written several award-winning papers on the environment and has been invited to attend conferences on science, technology, engineering,
and mathematics education and the environment;
whereas, Colby Bosley-Smith intends to major in
environmental science at the University of Vermont, where she's been awarded a President's Scholarship; therefore, be it resolved that the District of Columbia State Board of Education recognizes Colby Bosley-Smith for academic excellence and honors her as one of the District of Columbia's most promising and creative young science leaders in the high school graduating class of 2016," signed by President Jack Jacobson, Mary Lord, at-large member, and dated today's date, May 18, 2016. Congratulations.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Congratulations to you both.

(Applause.)

Now, Ms. Snyderman and Ms. Bosley-Smith, would you like to say a few words? We've got a couple minutes. Just make sure your microphone is turned on. The green light will be shining. Whomever would like to go first is welcome to.
First of all, I would like to thank the entire State Board of Education for this amazing opportunity. I am really looking forward to spending the summer in West Virginia and learning about all different types of science through this camp. I've always loved science, since I was little. Growing up in D.C., I think, was an amazing opportunity to explore science, especially because my father's office, when I was growing up, was directly across the street from the National Air and Space Museum. So whenever we would go visit Dad at the office, we'd spend the afternoon at the museum.

I immediately fell in love. It's been my favorite museum since then. I just couldn't believe all of the fantastical images of far-away galaxies and star clusters that filled the universe and were just outside of our own atmosphere. Since then, I was able to get an internship at the museum two years ago.

Really being able to go behind the
scenes and learn about the science behind all of the amazing stars and planets in the sky through solar observation and spectroscopy and gyroscopics, I really was able to delve deeper into the science that fascinated me since I was little. Through that, I've decided that this is what I want to study and go into, as I pursue a physics degree in college. Also, when I attend Brandeis this fall, I'm going to be joining the Quantitative Biology Research Fellowship, which is an opportunity for interdisciplinary science research. We will be looking at biological problems through a physics lens. I think this is really exciting, and this is also one reason that I was really excited to apply for this program this summer is because I really loved the idea of looking at problems from different perspectives and being able to use different areas of science in order to solve problems. Thank you again for this amazing opportunity. I'm so glad to be here tonight.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you so
much. You're very accomplished. Ms.

Bosley-Smith?

MS. BOSLEY-SMITH: So thank you, once again, for helping me secure this opportunity to attend the National Youth Science Camp. I have also been a huge fan of science for a long time. I am going to the University of Vermont to study environmental science. Living in D.C., going to Rock Creek Park, to the Chesapeake Bay and various places, the Appalachian Trail, I have really been exposed to lots of beautiful natural places. So I hope to learn more about those in the future, this summer, in West Virginia, and in Vermont next fall. I am particularly interested in exploring ecology. This past year, I completed a year-long expedition on oysters in the Chesapeake Bay and their benefits to reducing pollution, so I hope to go into that further. I am also very interested in learning more about climate change and what we can do to mitigate the effects of climate change. That is what I hope to do with my future, and that's what I hope to
learn more about this summer. Thank you.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you, Ms. Bosley-Smith. We're incredibly proud of you both, and we thank you for all of your hard work. We know that this is a wonderful opportunity, and we look forward to hearing from you afterwards, if you'd like to send us a note. If you send it to Mary, I'm sure she would send it along to the rest of the board, telling us about your experiences. Members, I would now entertain a joint motion on the resolutions.

MS. WATTENBERG: So moved.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Moved by Ms. Wattenberg. Is there a second on the resolutions?

MS. LORD: Second.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Seconded by Ms. Lord. Now that the motion is properly moved and seconded, I will ask for the yeas and nays. All in favor, please say aye.

(Chorus of ayes.)

Any opposed?
(No audible response.)

The resolutions are approved. We'll ask you to stay for just a second.

We're going to get some pictures after we do the other two ceremonial resolutions. I would again invite our Ward 3 member, Ruth Wattenberg, to discuss the U.S. Presidential Scholars program, and to read the resolution from the Woodrow Wilson student into the record. I'll take the Georgetown Day student, Mr. Kravitz. Then we'll ask Ms. Page and Mr. Kravitz to tell us about their achievements and plans for the future.

Ms. Wattenberg.

MS. WATTENBERG: Yes, so let me read this. "Whereas, since 1964, the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars has selected one young man and one young woman from each state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, and 15 additional individuals across the country who have demonstrated their excellence in academics, the arts, and career and technical
education fields; whereas, the Commission has, for the past 30 years, selected 20 individuals as U.S. Presidential Scholars in the arts and, for the first time, 20 U.S. Presidential Scholars in career and technical education; whereas, the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program has honored 7,000 of the nation's top-performing students since 1964; whereas, the Commission selects scholars based on their academic success, artistic excellence, essays, school evaluations and transcripts, as well as evidence of community service, leadership, and commitment to high ideals; whereas, this year's 160 winners were selected out of 5,600 eligible candidates, based on performance on the SAT or ACT, nominations made by chief state school officers or other organizations; whereas, Rachel S. Page of Woodrow Wilson High School was duly named a U.S. Presidential Scholar and a U.S. Presidential Scholar in the Arts; therefore, be it resolved that the District of Columbia State Board of Ed recognizes Rachel S. Page for her academic and
artistic achievements and honors her as one of
the District of Columbia's most promising young
scholars." Again, I just want to say it's my
lucky night. I've also known Rachel since she
was very little and a student at Janney.
Congratulations to you. I know when Rachel was
very young, she was already very involved in
writing and got a lot of accolades from her
classmates. I believe that is part of what
propelled this award, so congratulations.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you so
much, Ms. Wattenberg. I will read into the
record Ceremonial Resolution 16-4, honoring Noah
B. Kravitz, 2016 U.S. Presidential Scholar.

"Whereas, since 1964, the White House
Commission on Presidential Scholars has selected
one man and one young woman from each state, the
District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, and 15
additional individuals across the country who
have demonstrated their excellence in academics,
the arts, and career and technical education
fields; whereas, the Commission has, for the past
30 years, selected 20 individuals as U.S. Presidential Scholars in the arts and, for the first time, 20 U.S. Presidential Scholars in career and technical education; whereas, the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program has honored 7,000 of the nation's top-performing students since 1964; whereas, the Commission selects scholars based on their academic success, artistic excellence, essays, school evaluations and transcripts, as well as evidence of community service, leadership, and commitment to high ideals; whereas, this year's 160 winners were selected out of 5,600 eligible candidates, based on performance of the SAT or ACT and nominations made by chief state school officers or other organizations; whereas, Noah B. Kravitz of Georgetown Day School was named a U.S. Presidential Scholar; therefore, be it resolved that the District of Columbia State Board of Education recognizes Noah B. Kravitz for his academic achievements and honors him as one of the District of Columbia's most promising young
scholars."

Congratulations to you both.

(Applause.)

I would ask you now if you could share a few words about yourselves with us, and I will ask Ms. Page to start, and then Mr. Kravitz, and make sure you use the microphone.

MS. PAGE: Hi, I'm Rachel Page. Just to reiterate what Rachel said, thank you so much for having us here. I'm so lucky to have this opportunity and just thank you for being here. I don't know. I've been writing my whole life, like Ms. Wattenberg said. The Presidential Scholar in the Arts recognition that I got was because of my writing. I write for my school newspaper. I'm the written content editor, which means I edit all of the articles, and I also do creative writing.

This June, I'm going to Carnegie Hall, in New York City, for the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, which is cool. Then in the fall, I'll be attending Columbia University, also in
New York City, so I'm hoping to pursue more writing and English and humanities things there. Again, thank you for having me here.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you, Ms. Page, for joining us. Mr. Kravitz.

(Applause.)

MR. KRAVITZ: As everyone's already said, thank you again for having us. It's such an honor to be able to represent the District at the Presidential Scholar's Recognition Week in June. I am interested in a lot of different things. I studied a lot of things, ranging from math to linguistics, though my time in high school. I have to say I like all of it pretty much equally. One of the best things about my high school experience is that I've been able to take in everything in the classroom and go beyond. I've gone into school after hours to work on ceramics projects, and I've worked with math teachers to learn discrete mathematics.

I'm currently working with a history teacher to pursue an independent study in Arabic.
I'm really interested in learning a lot of different things for learning's sake and, ideally, bringing them together to create something greater. Next year, I plan to attend Yale University, where I still don't know what I'm going to study, hopefully all of the above. Thank you so much.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you.

(Applause.)

I would now entertain a joint motion on the resolutions.

MS. LORD: So moved.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Moved by Ms. Lord. Is there a second?

MS. WATTENBERG: Second by Ms. Wattenberg. Now that the motion is properly moved and seconded, I'll ask for the yeas and nays. All in favor, please say aye.

(Chorus of ayes.)

Any opposed?

(No audible response.)

The resolutions passed unanimously.
Now we will take a very short recess to give time for state board members to congratulate the students and their families and to take a few photos. We'll recess for five minutes.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled meeting went off the record at 5:57 p.m. and resumed 6:2 p.m.)

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: The meeting of the State Board of Education is now called back to order.

Welcome back. We will continue our meeting with public witnesses. The State Board welcomes public participation and activities under our authority.

At every public meeting, we begin the testimony from public witnesses on education-related matters. If you are a member of the public and would like to speak at a future public meeting, please contact our staff at sboe@dc.gov or by calling 202/741-0888.

We're going to do two batches of public witnesses. We will start with the
representatives from Capitol Hill Montessori,
Shelby Reitz. And as I call your name, please
feel free to come down to the witness table. A
parent at Capitol Hill Montessori at Logan.
Danica Petroshius, a parent at Capitol Hill
Montessori at Logan. Scott Weishaar, a parent at
Capitol Hill Montessori at Logan. And Tiffany
Brown, a parent at Capitol Hill Montessori at
Logan.

Feel free to take seats in whichever
order. Your testimony can be given to Ms.
Jamikka Briscoe-Kendrick.

So each have three minutes. Make sure
that the microphone light is on and then there is
a light notification up here on the top right of
the table. Green, you're good. Yellow, you're
running out of time, you've got about 30 seconds
left. And red, your time is up.

Let's start on your left and then just
go on down, introduce yourself, and read your
testimony into the record, please.

MS. REITZ: Good evening. My name is
Shelby Reitz. I'm a parent of two children at Capitol Hill Montessori which has students from every ward. We live in Ward 6. Thank you for the opportunity to testify tonight.

Capitol Hill Montessori was one of the DCPS schools where DGS recently identified lead in the water sources. This crisis has mobilized our parent community to improve the conditions not only at our school, but at schools across the District.

I would like to provide an overview of the problems at our school, how we're working with the broader community on this issue, and what we see as the path forward. The written testimony that I've given to the clerk includes more specific information including data and the links to some of the things that I'll talk about.

So in terms of chronology, we learned in April 2016, so just a couple of months ago, by a blog post that tests conducted in August 2015, so eight months prior, found three water sources with lead above the D.C. standard of 15 parts per
billion. At no point after those tests, not for
eight months until the blog post, did DGS notify
anyone at our school of the results. And it
turned out that DGS had only tested 9 of our 94
water sources.

So only after two community meetings
with DGS, two rounds of written questions that we
submitted, four rounds of public testimony,
meetings with Councilmembers Allen and Grosso,
plus numerous direct contacts with DGS, did we
finally secure comprehensive testing of all 94 of
our water sources.

Long story short, over the last year,
8 of the sources at our school showed lead levels
above 15 parts per billion. Four of those
sources are unquestionably used by children.
Numerous other sources showed lead levels below
the 15 parts per billion mark, but still above
zero.

DGS' failure to maintain a robust lead
testing program is a threat to public health and
an abdication of D.C.'s responsibility to its
children. On top of that, DGS' policies and conduct during this process have really been an embarrassment to the District's public oversight.

In terms of working with the community, we feel that getting to the bottom of this issue should not have required hundreds of hours of parents' work. We hope that other schools will not ever have to repeat the effort and we believe that a coordinated effort will ensure a better testing program across the board. So to that end, we have started a number of initiatives, hopefully to make things better.

We have a simple two-page document that we have shared with other organizations that summarizes our experience, provides points of contact and outlines a strategy for working productively with DGS. And you'll find that attached to my written testimony.

We've created a designated page on our school website for information related to the lead testing. We've formed an environmental committee made up of parents and teachers to
study the issue in depth and provide policy recommendations. And finally, we've started a Yahoo Group called Lead Free D.C. Schools where all schools and their communities can get involved and work with scientific experts to hopefully produce policy recommendations that the District can consider.

The path forward, I think, must include a major overhaul of DGS' policies and a complete reevaluation of D.C. standards for lead in schools. From the outset, DGS must conduct comprehensive testing of all water sources. They must use unique identifiers for each water source which they have not been doing. They must have a robust system for tracking filter installation and replacements and they must implement a policy to notify school communities of the lead test results. I think these are very obvious needs. They're basically low-hanging fruit.

But D.C., which means the City Council, and DCPS and the DME and DOEE and DGS, all working together, desperately needs new
protocols and standards for addressing the lead in schools. No level of exposure is acceptable for young children. That means we need comprehensive policies for water sources as well as for paint and for soil. We need reliable testing, accessible data, and meaningful communication. It means that we need new best practices and we at Capitol Hill Montessori are doing our part to determine perhaps what they should be.

Our school's committee is working with scientific experts and doing independent research and comparing our testing data to industry best practices to develop our positions. Our experts will use the Lead Free D.C. School's board to draft legislation to protect students from all sources from lead in D.C. Public Schools.

I hope we can work productively with all of the public bodies I have mentioned to make our schools safer for kids. Thank you.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you, Ms. Reitz.
MS. PETROSHIUS: Hi. I am Danica Petroshius, a Ward 6 parent at Capitol Hill Montessori. Our school is PK through 6th grade in one building, and a middle school in a trailer. And our families come from every ward. We love our school community, the teachers, the principal, the parents, and the Montessori approach, but our building is in need of serious stabilization and modernization. That's why we were shocked and disappointed in the Mayor's Capital Improvement Plan. It under funded the capital budget and therefore left a number of schools completely off the CIP including CHML which had been slated for modernization in FY '19.

Our community has pulled together to try to understand what is happening and why. The Mayor's plan as created about public input lacked data and did not prioritize facility conditions. At the Transportation Committee DGS oversight hearing Director Weaver testified upon questioning that CHML facilities had never been
assessed by DGS.

The Mayor's budget could not have been an objective, data-driven process because there was no data for our school. In addition, the Mayor's metrics to when schools are faulty and inconsistent: one, they do not provide a middle school priority consistently. CHML's middle school did not receive a priority like other middle schools. In deciding our capacity rate, it appears that trailer square footage that houses the middle school was counted for purposes for determining building utilization. This means that they do know we have a middle school.

Two, they have built on neighborhood and ward metrics that have little meaning for city-wide schools like ours and a city fueled by out of boundary twice.

Three, they make facility conditions arguably the important criteria in deciding how to prioritize modernizations less than ten percent weight.

We are pleased that the Council is
taking a much better approach. They support the $4 million in stabilization funds for much needed HVAC system and ceiling repairs at our school. And we also support the Council of Education Committee's improved metrics for ranking schools, that one, include all schools. Two, give all schools with children in the middle grades a middle school priority. And three, focus more on facility needs than on population of ward.

When the new metrics are applied, our school ranks fourth greatest in need in all DCPS schools.

We are disappointed though that the Council budget still does not change the Mayor's proposed CIP which means our school still has a long way to go to secure funding for modernization.

To us, the Mayor's budget is misguided and under funded. We strongly support D.C. Council's efforts to improve it, but even the Council's budget leaves too many schools without help.
Going forward, we ask one, DGS fully assess our building and include parents and school administration in the process. We are the ones who know our buildings best.

Two, the final budget for the city should include our stabilization funding and DGS should work with us to implement it soon.

Three, Council should codify the Education Committee's metrics for modernization and the city should use that system for funding decisions.

Four, all city leaders should implement policy to make modernization and stabilization data driven, transparent, efficient, and the effective.

And five, we should all work together to modernize all schools in the next six years. By meeting this goal we can take a giant step forward towards being our best DCPS together.

Thank you.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you, Ms. Petroshius.
Mr. Weishaar.

MR. WEISHAAR: Good evening. My name is Scott Weishaar and my daughter is a kindergartner at Capitol Hill Montessori Logan. CHML is an elementary and middle school located in Ward 6, but is a city-wide school. As a community, we have had to pull together and really understand what is happening in our city regarding school buildings and the health and safety of the people in them. It's been disheartening at best, alarming at worst.

We've discovered the following. Our school building poses significant safety and health issues including lead in the water, as you've heard, and also in paint that had not been disclosed and remediated properly. Our school building had never been assessed, thus, our school was completely left off the modernization budget.

We are not alone with these discoveries and we've been working hard to advocate change not only for my daughter's
school, but for many other schools as well. In response, we had no choice but to do significant research on these issues at night, after work, and after the kids are tucked in. We have had to organize significant advocacy to urge the city to address all of these issues.

We have made some progress, but there's a long way to go. The bottom line is this. We need to implement policies and protocols that address all of these issues. Parents should not have to do this kind of work to have these needs met. To that end, our community is strongly supportive of the Council's efforts to recommend policies to DCPS, DGS, and the Mayor that we hope they will take seriously.

Both the Committee on Education and the Council on Transportation and the Environment took significant steps towards addressing areas of need and policy recommendations. The Committee on Education, under the leadership of Chairman Grosso recommended that DCPS one, explore more inclusive ways to garner feedback
and input from students during the budget process; and two, establish a strategic communications protocol for alerting school communities on environmental safety matters in DCPS facilities.

The Committee on Transportation and Environment, under the leadership of Chairperson Cheh, recommend that DGS one, establish a new systematic approach to lead testing in all public schools; two, pilot a design/build model for school modernization projects; and three, conduct an annual safe and healthy school assessment that would result in a comprehensive report card.

We think all of these policy recommendations will be a major step forward in addressing major issues in the safety, health and modernization needs of our school buildings.

I thank you for your time.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON:  Thank you, Mr. Wishaar. Mr. Brown.

MS. BROWN:  Good evening, President Jacobson, members of the State Board of
Education, Vice President Karen Williams in her absence. She is my constituent as well as my ward representative. Thank you for the opportunity to speak at your monthly public meeting. My name is Tiffany L. Brown. I'm a fourth generation Washingtonian, a proud product of D.C. Public Schools, a D.C. Public Schools teacher, the ANC Commissioner for 7B-02, the Chairperson of the LSAT at Capitol Hill Montessori at Logan, and the proud parent of two children at that school, one in 3rd grade and the other in 2nd.

I'm here today as a member of that school community that works tirelessly to ensure that the District has a great Montessori school.

I come before you today because we oppose the Mayor's FY '17 through '22 Capital Improvement Plan, CIP, as it is proposed. In addition to the policy issues that my fellow parents mentioned, it is an under assessment in our school's needs. As a community of parents, we are pleased overall that the Mayor's current
budget proposal clearly responds to the needs to focus on school modernization as a priority by increasing funding for these projects. The reality is this budget does not go far enough. It leaves too many schools behind.

The CIP should cover all schools. Our school, Capitol Hill Montessori, was taken off the budget that had previously been slotted for modernization in FY '19 with no rationale. There are other groups of schools, many like our ours in need of stabilization and modernization, but were just told well, you have to wait until after FY '22 and hope for the best.

Many of our children will be long gone from the school by then. In FY '22, my son will be a 9th grader and my daughter will be an 8th grader. As an 18-year veteran teacher of DCPS, I have seen time after time schools get passed over for modernization. During my tenure, I have observed the following: Birney, the first school I worked at was not ever modernized until it was purchased by a charter school. Garfield, the
second school I worked, had only surface 
modernization completed. I remember once during
a rain storm the water poured into the building
because it was in such disrepair.

The next school I had the pleasure of
working at was Randle Highlands, that total
modernization has never been completed. Next,
there was Charles Young, not touched. Then there
was Savoy, where I can honestly say there had
been a total modernization which had the help and
financial backing of 21st Century Schools. My
current school, Noyes, was fully modernized in
the mid-2000s.

I say all this to say that we're in
need of a robust stabilization plan based on the
health and safety needs of all students. Too
many schools have serious health and safety
concerns including lead exposure, poor air
quality, lack of working heat and air
conditioning, high decibel levels, lack of
functioning windows, inadequate security
capability and the list goes on.
No child or teacher should have to be in a school with these present health and safety concerns. These are issues that need to be addressed in Year 1 of any CIP and by measurable, effective, and accountable management of ongoing maintenance and improvement of existing schools, not over five years or more.

We need a larger investment to modernize all schools, not just some in six years. Just as called for in the '20-'22 campaign for school modernization, the city should commit to funding over the next six years every school modernization.

We can't afford to leave any school behind. Gone are the days of the city's financial receivership and security. Our city's economy is booming. We lead other cities with three to four percent annual growth. And with that we have a surplus in our reserve. In this time of economic security and growth, we should make our children and their schools our top priority.
In addition, as an ANC Commissioner for 7B-02, I'm asking for your support for the 20 percent of the school population that resides in Ward 7. I have two very important constituents that are counting on me with the support of this body to ensure that this happens. We look forward to working with you to achieve these goals and set us on a path to safety and success for every student and every community in the nation's capital.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you so much, Commissioner Brown. Thank you all for coming. The Deputy Mayor is here and she's heard your testimony which we greatly appreciate. Vice President Williams sends her best regards and is sorry that she isn't here this evening, but thanks you for your testimony.

With that, we've got your written testimony. You're welcome to stick around and watch our dialogue with the Deputy Mayor and I think Mr. Weedon will probably have some follow up with your situation in particular. Thank you.
We're now going to call our final panel of public comment witnesses. Ms. Merilyn Holmes, Executive Director of Total Sunshine, Incorporated. Peter McPherson is not available this evening. Cedric Hendricks, School Without Walls; Francis Stevens, LSAT and School Improvement Team Chair; and IBe' Bulinda Crawley, Historic Anacostia Arts Education.

Again, the microphone has a button. Make sure the green light is on. The upper right corner of the table has an indicator for you. Green, you're good; yellow, you've got 30 seconds; and red, time is up. You've each got three minutes starting with Ms. Holmes.

MS. HOLMES: Good evening. Once again, I'm back. I'm Eleanor Holmes, the Executive Director of Total Sunshine, promoting smiles in the community. I tell you, as a paramedic in the city for the last 20 years, it's been really interesting and seeing the things going on in the city. And it's really troubling to see that so many young people have as many
issues as they do. But when I think about Total
Sunshine and being a medic to society and
promoting the smiles that we do for our young
scholars, it makes me happy. And it makes me
feel that our efforts in this eighth year of
supporting our top graduates is very much
worthwhile.

I'm going to talk to you a little bit
about a school grade incentive program supports
D.C.'s top graduates. I think it's a great segue
into me talking about this on this panel with the
young scholars that you were all honoring just a
small while ago. And I saw so many smiles, oh
yes, everyone was smiling and so happy and proud
to see these young people excel and going on to
Yale and great schools and doing great things.

And our D.C. top graduates, all 66
valedictorians and salutatorians -- there's my
picture. Yes, indeed, they will be going away to
college from public schools, from charter
schools, but they will be going to Harvard, to
Yale, to Stanford, and they absolutely need to be
supported.

This has been my mission with Total Sunshine over the last eight years as a part of our School Grade Incentive Program and not only do we do this annual ceremony, we do anti-violence, like coping skills seminars in schools and we've been doing that for quite some time.

It's been 16 years of Total Sunshine in the city and I'll tell you, it's been quite a road. I've been doing a lot of outreach, trying to make sure that we have the technology for these young people.

And this year, Thursday, June 23rd, I'm sure you guys have seen this everywhere. I've been emailing it, and tweeting it, and putting it on Instagram and everywhere. I've been trying to reach out to everyone to make sure that everybody knows that it's time to come out and clap for our best, the cream of the crop that we have from the city, the first, not last, the ones that are doing homework right now.

Now we know that all of the
valedictorians and salutatorians have yet to be
determined because the final grade point averages
have yet to be tallied. However, these young
people are not just good students. They've been
getting straight As for the last four years at
least. And I'll tell you, that makes things
very, very, very worthy of support.

Now at Total Sunshine we try our best
to make sure we send them to college with a
laptop. Now historically, our funding,
unfortunately, has not been able to do that.
Last year we gave tablets. RG3 was the
contributor for that, his Family of 3 Foundation
made sure that these young people, all of our top
graduates, which is generally roughly 70 every
year and a technological piece for college.

Now I had to pray about what I was
going to say today, honestly, because I've gotten
some really mixed responses and some apathetic
responses from some people and places that I
thought would perhaps be so happy and willing to
support these young people, but I've got to tell
you, as I told one of our Council persons, I said
you know, I think this is what the Lord wants me
to be doing. And somehow I'm very passionate
about this. This is not my job. I'm a
paramedic. I'm not here to talk about
ventricular tachydysrhythmias and talk about
other things that have to do with medicine or
talk about anything else in my life. And it's
really, really busy. I've been moving and my
back is hurting and I'm tired. But this is so
important to me that I made sure that I got here
today, even today, despite everything and I'm
sure everyone has a super, hugely, busy schedule.

I just met with our Councilmember --
Chairman Mendelson this morning and it's been
quite a road. It really has. But I'm determined
that we're going to send these best young people
out of this city with what they need And if
someone wants to know more about our school grade
incentive program, they can feel free to email me
directly at totalsunshine.org. They can look at
totalsunshine.org. It's all over the web. Or
they can call the Total Sunshine hotline. It's 202/575-0462.

We're still looking for people that are proud, that want to come out and clap for these young people, just as hard as we were clapping earlier, if not harder, or at least at the same decibel level. And we have actually started to get some of our support letters that we generally give. Councilmember May, Councilmember Grosso and also Councilmember Evans, thank you for your letters of support. Letters are great. Laptops are better. And that's essentially what I'm here for.

Now I come out here every single month and I will be back next month with a great update. I'm hopeful on the support for these young people because it will be right before the ceremony. I have our city-wide list and I'll just super briefly go over. Ward 1, 5 schools; Ward 2; 2 schools; Ward 3; 1 school; Ward 4, 5 schools; Ward 5; 6 schools; Ward 6, 3 schools; Ward 7, 6 schools; Ward 8, 5 schools, 66 top
graduates. They need laptops for college, you all. Thank you.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you, Ms. Holmes. Ms. Crawley.

MS. CRAWLEY: Good evening. This is the first time I've ever been here, so. My name is IBe' Crawley. I am the proud parent of two DCPS graduates. I'm also a retired Fairfax County Public School International Baccalaureate Coordinator. And now I am the Director of Historic Anacostia Arts Education and it's an education advocacy that I've started since I retired.

So my comments today are regarding advanced learners at Anacostia High School and the programs that support their development.

So according to the most recent data posted on Anacostia's home page, the percentage of students who are enrolled in and passing AP exams have doubled from three percent to six percent. And as this improvement is applaudable, we believe that Anacostia community's future
really does depend upon graduating of advanced students from our local high school.

We need our students who are graduating from our local high school to become our business owners and to become our dentists and our teachers and our leaders and our artists. And so we believe that we have to support the graduating class and we think that the business community has to support advanced academics in order to be able to grow our future leaders.

So these student leaders are important to improving not only the link between their elders, people who they live in the community with, who we want to be able to continue to live in the community because those students will provide support for their family members, but also they're the link to the future development.

So Historic Anacostia Arts education offers a museum studies and digital literacy project to outstanding Anacostia students who are enrolled in their neighborhood school. Many students who are advanced learners in the
Anacostia community oftentimes leave the
Anacostia community to attend schools outside of
our community. So very few of our advanced
learners stay in the community. But those who
stay in the community need support.

So we have established a cohort of 12
Anacostia students who have expressed interest in
the arts and in technology. Now sometimes those
students may not have been accepted in
alternative schools such as Walls or Wilson or
Banneker because they may need additional
literacy support and we're prepared to provide
that support. Because ultimately we want our
students to be able to play it forward by being
able to offer their new skills to the community
whether they're volunteering or participating in
community forums or even engaging with businesses
that seek to reach and communicate with those
high school age students.

So I see the light is red, so I'll
tell you what I want. I want you all to support
us by spreading the word that this is something
that we are passionate about and that we want to
-- we have 90,000 people in the District of
Columbia who read below the 5th grade level. We
can change that by starting with one small cohort
of 12. And support those kids so they can
support their families and those families can
grow.

So we want support and secondly, we
would like for you all to encourage that we be
able to have the summer youth employment program
support these 12 students because with financial
support, they're working throughout the summer
and being able to receive some sort of income.
It just kind of keeps that enthusiasm that we all
have when we receive some financial support for
our learning. I'm a life-long learner and so are
you. We all enjoy our support. Thank you.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you, Ms.
Crawley. We really appreciate you coming down
this evening.

Mr. Hendricks.

MR. HENDRICKS: Members of the Board,
I want to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I'm a parent of two children at the School Without Walls at Francis-Stevens. I'm also proud to say I'm a parent of two children that graduated from the high school as well. And they're the reason that I'm at the middle school right now. I had a chance to get to know Richard Trogisch, our principal, back during the earlier experience with my kids. And I should say one of those children wound up with one of those coveted Trachtenberg scholarships. Went on to G.W. University and got a degree in mechanical engineering.

So it's that promise that I saw and that's what drew me to the school. Now we have an exciting experience going on there. We have an active parent body. I should say that tonight, right now, our HSA is meeting and I'm not able to be there with them. Today, for example, were elections for our HSA as well as our LSAT. I'm running for reelection and I don't know yet whether I was reelected or not, but you
know, we're trying to be as much involved as we can in the governance process of the school system. And so that's why we take advantage of every opportunity to appear and speak on behalf of our school.

We, like the panel earlier, have experienced some horror stories with respect to the school modernization process. We've experienced promises made and promises not kept. And that's a very frustrating thing. You go to meetings with the school people and the DGA people at 8 o'clock or 8:30 in the morning, you know, when you've got to still rush off and go to work or you had to get up and get your kids ready for school and handle all this. And then the commitments made are not delivered on time and you kind of are left in the dark, you know, losing confidence in the process, losing trust in the skills and capability of the people that the school system sends out to meet with you and then you wind up after they do what they do, disappointed because of quality and timeliness of
the work just doesn't meet our expectations.

We're blessed that the Council, as you all know, took some action to remedy some of the problems that we have with our capital funding, but it shouldn't have to be that way. You know, where you engage a process that lacks a bit of transparency and then you wind up having to go play the political process out at the Council to try and get fixed what was done wrong to you. And then you wind up pitting one school against the other, you know, and that isn't how it should be.

Now you all probably saw this article in today's City Paper that says Ward 4 parents are upset by delayed school modernization. Well, I venture to say that parents in every ward are upset by the process of school modernization and at some point that's got to be fixed. I think what the Council is trying to do in terms of bringing the rule of reason to the process some objectivity, there's really where hope lies. I think all of the recommendations made by the
previous panel are recommendations that I can second. And if just some of that happens, I think we'll all be in a better place next year and we'll be anxious to keep our kids in the D.C. Public School system rather than pull them out and run to one of the private schools in town or in the suburbs hoping that we can find something better.

I want to keep my kids here in the D.C. Public School system and that depends upon whether or not DCPS will deliver on what they promise. So thank you very much.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you so much. I thank all of you for coming here this evening. If you haven't already done so, provide copies of your testimony either to our clerk or email them to our Executive Director, John-Paul Hayworth. With that, I invite you to stick around and listen to our dialogue with the Deputy Mayor for Education on facilities, if you are able.

We are fortunate to be joined this
evening by Deputy Mayor for Education, Ms. Jennie Niles.

Deputy Mayor, if you would like to come to the table, we'll -- I'll keep talking while you get situated.

Effective teachers and able school leadership are two important pillars to student success. The third pillar, facilities, is just as vital to student success. Without classrooms that are safe, appropriate, and modern, education will suffer. In the District, many of our school facilities are decades old. We have spent millions of dollars to modernize and repair public schools. We have also allocated further millions to ensure that charter schools have appropriate space for their students.

Unfortunately, the process for selecting which schools receive support and which went without was not always done fairly, nor equitably. The current administration and the Council have made equitable school modernization a priority and I want to applaud them for that
work.

    I want to also urge them to continue
to ensure that every dollar of our school
modernization budget is spent in an approach that
will address immediate health and safety issues
at our schools and provide the best facilities in
the shortest time possible.

    Our students deserve to be in
classrooms that they can be proud of. So do our
teachers and other school staff for that matter.

    Deputy Mayor Niles, please begin when
you're ready.

    DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Good evening,
everybody. It's nice to be here. I think this
is the first time I've been here in this role
rather than in being a school leader. And
President Jacobson, would you like me to talk
about lead or should we just stick to
modernization?

    PRESIDENT JACOBSON: I think a brief
comment or discussion on lead would be great.
You sent us a wonderful letter that is now on the
State Board of Education website, but if you want
to spend a couple of minutes on that and then
move into facilities, that would be terrific.

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Great. Why don't
I do that. So thank you for including me tonight
and thank all of the folks who testified earlier.
When I took this new job, this wasn't exactly
what I thought I might be spending all of my time
doing, but of course, it's squarely within the
responsibilities of the Deputy Mayor for
Education. So I am here willingly, not just here
willingly, but in the job willingly and taking on
the responsibility for both of these things
willingly.

In terms of what's happened with our
water sampling, the way that I would describe it
is that we have had a crisis of communication and
a crisis of confidence. Thankfully, we have not
have a health crisis. And so while it is not
acceptable that the water sampling results were
not shared with parents in a timely way at our
schools, I am relieved that the blood screening
that's happened recently, along with the additional sampling, which I can talk more about in a minute, has not shown that we have an increase or even a dramatic number of students with elevated blood levels.

Let me be clear. Lead for students is not safe and it is by no means something that I am trying to push off, but I have been in conversations daily with our Director of Health, our Department of Health, as well as DOEE and they have repeatedly reminded me that we do not have a health crisis. We do, however, have a crisis about communication, timely communication to parents and a crisis of confidence that this is not the only item that is bringing on this crisis of confidence.

So to date, we have had actually nearly 13,000 water samples taken out of 109 of 116 DCPS buildings. We have 57 schools where we already have the results back and we have seen that we have 29 schools that have actionable levels of non-drinking water sources and 21
schools that have drinking sources. Every
drinking source that we have found an actionable
level, we will remediate with a filter and
retest. And in the mean time that water source
is turned off.

The process itself, and the Board had
shared with me a number of questions about this,
rather than go through those questions in detail,
you'll be happy to know that we expect tomorrow
to post an FAQ series of answers to the questions
that you all posed, as well as questions that
other school communities have posed. There is
one currently there, but we're refreshing it and
so we expect that to be on the website tomorrow.
So I think that that will answer lots of the
technical questions, although you're certainly
welcome to ask me and you'll see how much my
expertise in water testing has grown.

One of the things that the -- the
critical element that was not happening before
was that DGC was performing the water testing.
DOEE was supervising the water testing, but DCPS
was not getting the results. And it's actually
DCPS that we want to be responsible for
communicating with school communities. And so in
this recent round of testing, every set of
results we've gotten has gone directly to DCPS.

DCPS has been sending out one of three letters.
One letter is all of the samples came back and
these are all of the drinkable water sources in
each of our DCPS school buildings.

If there were no actionable letters,
there's a letter that goes home and says we got
all of the results, no actionable levels.
There's another letter that says we did find
actionable levels. It tells you where and says
that it's going to be remediated. And then
there's a third letter for after we go back and
retest that we will send out to say and here's
the retest results.

Each school will get also detailed
information about all of their water sources and
what those tests are. Those are going to be
posted on a weekly basis, so if you were to go to
the DGS website right now, you'll see there are
about 12 schools listed and as we get results in,
we're posting them, not just for the school
community, but also for the public at large.

We also have carried out blood
screenings and we've done that because -- not
because we had a health crisis, though it is
confirmed that we haven't, but because we did not
communicate clearly with parents in a timely way.
And we do not want parents to be worried about
the health of their students in our buildings.
Nothing is more important than the health of our
students, and so we wanted to do this to make
sure that students could answer the question if
they had any question about the lead results for
their student.

Excuse me, I'm just looking at my
notes for a minute. Great. We have done over
300 blood screenings and we have not found any
levels above the CDC level that's attributable to
the water in schools. That is good news. We
also will be having three -- excuse me, four
city-wide blood screening opportunities in partnership with DOEE in the next month and DCPS families are going to get a letter about that. DOEE is going to publicize it as well as I shared it with the email with you.

One of them will be a truck touch and so we know that that's a particularly good place for little people to both touch trucks and perhaps get their fingers touched by a small sampling needle which I know is not the best combo in the world, but certainly -- one of the things I should mention and while I'm not a doctor, I've certainly now heard quite a bit about lead and we know that lead is most detrimental to students in their earliest years, so the first and second years of life. And we have mandatory lead testing until age six.

One's body digests -- digest isn't the right word, sorry. What's the medical term I kept hearing? Anyway, responds to lead in different ways and adults are not nearly as susceptible as children are. That is not to say
that we can have actionable levels of lead
happening in any of our drinkable water sources
in our schools.

We will also be testing -- we've just
begun testing on all of our DPR sites and they
will be done before our first camps begin June
19th.

Why don't I stop for a minute and see
if there are questions about lead and then I can
move over to modernization. Would that make the
most sense?

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: I prefer to do
all of your testimony and then do rounds of
questions in order that board members appeared.
Is that okay with you?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Sure.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Wonderful.

Proceed with the remainder of your testimony.

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Great. School
modernization. This has definitely been one of
the most complex subjects in taking on this role
and it's also one of the most important because
making sure that our kids have safe, healthy, and actually exciting buildings that engender the learning that we want all kids to experience is critical.

There are a number of things, while many folks have been frustrated with various aspects of the Capital Improvement Plan, I want to point out a couple of the things that we put forward in this Capital Improvement Plan which are improvements and will help us move towards, I think, getting to where we need to go.

The first is that in past Capital Improvement Plans, there were not sufficient funds to modernize the buildings that were listed in the Capital Improvement Plans. This Capital Improvement Plan has done two things. One is moved away from having phased approaches to modernizing buildings to a full modernization approach. The reason we want to do this is because it's more cost effective and it is more time effective.

The second thing we wanted to do was
make sure we had the proper amount of money, the appropriate amount of money in the budget when the school was listed as a modernization. So for those schools that are in the CIP, you'll notice that some of them have doubled in size. Their budgets have doubled in size and with really dramatic increases. And that was to make sure that we could actually do the full modernizations of those buildings.

We also -- although I certainly heard it criticized before, we built the sequencing of what buildings based on objective criteria and it was based on Councilmember Grosso's work from last year. Perhaps not everybody would agree on exactly what criteria, but it was objective and it was transparent. And that was another component that was really vital.

Also, I think, I should have probably started with this in the beginning. The Mayor added $220 millions in FY '17 and '18 to be able to do these full modernizations. And when we started this process before she had decided to do
that, everything looked dramatically bleaker.

I'm pleased to say that 98 out of our 112 schools will be modernized by the time that the CIP ends. We also will have finished all of the DCPS stand alone middle schools and all of the DCPS comprehensive and application high schools.

There's no way -- I want to make sure that I also say every single building that has not been modernized needs to be modernized. I have gotten to visit all of the school buildings and that is clear and it's clear to the Mayor as well. So I think that I will stop there so that you all can ask me questions about the modernization process.

I just want to flag one thing which is I am prepared to talk about the process and the overall CIP. I'm not in a position most likely to answer questions about specific buildings, although I can take notes and see if I can get back to you. But unfortunately, my head does not remember all of the specifics about all of the
PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you so much, Deputy Mayor. We really appreciate you being here this evening.

Board members, we're going to go in the order in which you arrived. We're going to start with Ms. Jolly from Ward 8 and then move to Mr. Weedon from Ward 6, followed by Ms. Wattenberg. Let's do a six-minute round if that's okay with you and we'll start with Ms. Jolly.

MS. JOLLY: How is your office planning to involve parents in the communities where schools are actually at -- the people who actually use the buildings in the modernization planning?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: So one of the other things that we did that I should have mentioned in making a change from previous years to this year is we have made it clear that DCPS is the final decision maker about -- rather than DGS -- in terms of modernizing buildings. So
this is an important thing for a number of reasons. When schools have been modernized, there have been lots of questions about why have there been cost overruns? Why have there been program decisions this way? Why have there been program decisions that way?

When I arrived, one of the things that seemed clear to me was that because there was no single point accountability around this, that there was lots of confusion, so we have clarified that accountability and it is with DCPS, so DGS is in the service of DCPS.

So that then goes to the notion of our CIP process which is when community and school leadership works together. The CIP process, this year we're transitioning, so that all CIP processes will be led by DCPS, not by DGS. And DGS certainly made valiant efforts to try and lead those processes, but I certainly have been in a number of conversations where people have reported getting different information from DGS and DCPS. So this way we're also streamlining
the communication around it.

    So the CIP process has been re-
envisioned and there has been new staffing at 
DCPS to be able to lead that. I think we still 
have a handful of CIP teams that are run by DGS, 
rather than DCPS in this transition year, but 
going forward, we will have all of the CIP 
processes run by DCPS, so community engagement in 
the CIP process.

    I probably need to -- I've seen -- I'm 
trying to conjure in my head as I'm talking, the 
diagram that describes the different meetings 
we've set out so that the CIP process -- and this 
is actually on the DCPS website, the various 
different meetings and their purpose for each one 
relative to engaging the community. I can get 
back to you with further -- that's not my area of 
expertise, but I can certainly -- we can both 
look at the website and see what other questions 
you may have about it.

MS. JOLLY: Thank you, Deputy Mayor 
Niles.
PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Mr. Weedon, and then Ms. Wattenberg.

MR. WEEDON: First, I'd just like to say thank you. Thank you for joining us. Thank you for all the work you're doing in both these issues. It's just critically important.

I've heard from probably a majority of the schools in Ward 6, some with high lead tests, others without. But across the ward, there's a lot of concern. And I think your statement about this not being a health crisis, but being a communications, and probably more importantly, being a public competence crisis is 100 percent accurate.

And I think that builds off of many of the questions that families have around the CIP process and school modernizations and broken promises there.

A quick follow up to my colleague from Ward 8, CIP meetings are public, correct?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: I think so. I'm embarrassed to say the CIP process is not -- I
did not remember to study that before I came.

Although I have known it once.

    MR. WEEDON: I have heard multiple
things. I am a member of the Eliot-Hine CIP, so
I'm involved there. I've been at the Maury CIP.
I've been kicked out of multiple CIP meetings
which, of course, I refused to leave because as
Ward 6 went through the process last year, walk-
ins we received information that they were public
and that under open meetings they were supposed
to be.

    But I think there's still a little bit
of confusion within the staff and within the
broader community whether or not they are. I
certainly treat them as such and I believe that
they should be. So if we can find a clear answer
to that.

    And as importantly as communicating it
to the public, ensuring that the staff leading
those meetings are aware and they do a better job
of communicating it to school communities and to
the public would be very helpful.
DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Great.

MR. WEEDON: Around lead, DGS has posted lead testing results for a handful of students tested between April 30th and May 4th. Miner's test from April 29th are not among the tests that have been published. Is there any reason for that and when can we expect Miner's results to be published?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: I can -- in the midst of this I'll have -- so Shane Wells from my office has just joined me. So half my brain, so yes, they are open. Sorry, CIP team meetings are open. Shane just helped me confirm that.

MR. WEEDON: Thank you.

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: We will look to see when Miner's results are due in. We will check before I say it's going to be this week, but I am 99 percent sure.

MR. WEEDON: But just to remind you, Miner was one of the schools that was originally identified, so timely communication there is very important.
DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Yes, I agree.

MR. WEEDON: Just in the last few days and this was brought to me by a parent, in results that were released just this last week, schools including Walker-Jones in Ward 6 and Wheatley have major violations. At least three at Walker-Jones and this is the May 11th report, labeled as fountains with readings of 168, 89, and 29.

Can you walk us through what's been done with that community and the broader community to make sure that people are aware of these results and the maintenance that's going on there?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Sure. Let me just go back to Miner for just a minute. So not only do we need to get -- we'll confirm that we're going to have those results this week, but I'm also meeting, I'm going out to the Miner community next week to meet with the parents there.

In terms of -- sorry, you were
mentioning Walker-Jones?

MR. WEEDON: Walker-Jones.

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: So for every school, once we receive the results from -- once DGS receives the results from the testing company, we immediately send that to DCPS. DCPS reviews it and sends out a letter, one of those three that I mentioned. If it's the one that says there's an actionable result, it actually lists where the actionable result is in the building and that's sent to every parent in the school. And so they know then.

What happens on the DGS side is that they immediately make sure that the water source is off. They remediate it which for drinking sources is a filter and then they retest it before it's opened again.

MR. WEEDON: And what's the time line for that water source to be shut off?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Immediate.

MR. WEEDON: Is that 24 hours? Is that immediate when it comes back?
DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Yes, within 24
hours, if not sooner.

MR. WEEDON: And that's for -- well,
I've got two questions. One, how do we determine
what's a drinking source? I noticed at Walker-
Jones there was also some outdoor spigots that
were not labeled as drinking sources. I can tell
you that my children have picked up the hose and
drank out of the outdoor spigots at multiple
schools. Why is that not labeled as a possible
drinking source?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Sure, so drinking
sources always include water fountains, sinks,
kitchen sinks and where students are.
The outdoor sources are particularly
difficult to -- we will tag them to say that they
are not for drinking, figuring out how to
remediate them is -- it's not -- we're figuring
out how to do that quickly.
The other sources we are shutting off
showers as we figure out how to remediate
showers. For boiler room and for other areas of
the building where we don't expect students to be
-- excuse me, where students are never expected
to be, we are -- those are not getting a filter.

Let me talk for a minute about the way
that -- so each source has two different water
samples taken from it, a first one and then after
a minute of the water going through a second one.
Most, the vast majority, even the actionable
water readings that we have found have been in
the first sample and actually do not have an
actionable level in the second sample because
flushing the water source is one of the ways to
rid it of lead because one of the reasons that
lead is in the water is because water has been
sitting there and it's been leaching out from
some part of the pipe right there.

So to answer your question, the
outdoor hose bibs, we are figuring out what to
do. We need to label them to make sure that
folks and kids know that that's not for drinking
source and there will just have to be some pre-
planning about how to make sure that we have any
of the potable water sources from any of the
sinks, any of the kitchen sinks, any of the water
fountains for kids.

And then those outdoor bibs, often
after it's run through, it has a level below
actionable, but I know that we want to make sure
that we don't have kids ingesting it even if it's
soon to be not actionable.

MR. WEEDON: Right. I'm over time,
but we'll come back. I think we're doing
multiple rounds.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: If the Deputy
Mayor has time, I'd love to do a second round, a
shorter second round.

MR. WEEDON: Thank you.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Let's go to Ms.
Wattenberg, and then Ms. Lord.

MS. WATTENBERG: Hi. And thanks again
for coming, taking the time to do this. So I
have a question. So there's more money coming in
thanks to the Mayor's budget to support a larger
capital budget which is terrific.
One general question is you guys have a protocol that's made a list of schools and their order and the Council has a protocol and a list and I can tell you most people that I'm in touch with find that the Council protocols and the order ended up being more related to reality that they face and I'm curious about how you see the difference between the two, why they are and whether there's some possibility for them to be better consolidated.

Somewhat related to that is in the new proposal where you go to full modernizations instead of the interim phases, what happens to schools that have had a full modernization or maybe aren't due for a full modernization, but have a substantial set of repair issues that are beyond their regular maintenance budget? Roofs and so on. How does that fit into the time line?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Sure. So the last part of your question is what we describe as what's needed in the stabilization budget. And so there's a modernization budget. And then
there's a line that allows for roofs and other significant HVAC systems that wouldn't be expected to come out of the school's budget itself. Those are anticipated and scheduled with DGS so that -- and so many of those things, for instance, the windows at Logan are in the stabilization budget and are already budgeted for to happen in FY '17.

Forgive me, the first question you asked was about the two different sets of criteria?

MS. WATTENBERG: Yes, yes.

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: I think I anticipate that going forward, we will be able to have a set of criteria that we are in full agreement about. The criteria that the administration put forward was as thoughtful as we wanted to make it as good as we could make. Councilmember Grosso added some other pieces and nuances and there's some value to that as well. And so I think that going forward, I think that we can keep -- we have worked well
together, the administration and the Education Committee and so I anticipate that we'll be able to keep improving that as we go forward and we're getting better and better at this, I hope.

MS. WATTENBERG: Do I have time for one comment? And then I probably won't need a second round. This is really just a comment which is when I look at the school that's most on my mind, there's just a constant issue with the budget estimates that get put forward not being realistic which -- and it happens over and over again causing a great deal of cost in terms of having to go back and get new drawings and enormous, enormous exhaustion and cynicism on the part of the CIP committees and the communities.

I don't know a lot about construction. I don't understand why this is so chronic and it seems to be -- and I just wonder as you go forward, you have this new protocol with DCPS leading and so on. Is that something that you have some optimism that you can crack that nut and get that fixed?
DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: So I think there are two issues. One is that we are reevaluating the educational specs which is the generic program that we would have for elementary, middle school, high school. And we want to be using that as a rule of thumb so that's another piece of what will make us more efficient going forward and also making sure that the educational program decisions are driving the building design and cost.

The second thing is is that so while I had in my prior life I had the good fortune to rebuild or build three buildings and when it's designed, when it's priced, I had never experienced and I've never met anybody that didn't experience the price being more than they had planned. I had never experienced this with somebody doing a house remodeling or any kind of construction.

And so one of the things we definitely by having ed. specs by also using the most up-to-date numbers. As you may know, one of the ways
that you estimate the amount -- so for our
buildings that are in '17-'18 that have been
planned, the numbers of how much that costs are
quite good because we have a very detailed
design. Even in the out years, we have a
formula, but it's not designed yet, and so we
have tried to do our best and this would be
industry practice to say this is how much per
square foot we anticipate it being and so this is
how much it's going to cost.

There will never be a time where it's
perfect, but we should absolutely be getting
better and better at having both the estimate and
understand that accuracy and then making it clear
whether that's what the budget line is, whether
that's accurate or not, relative to this process.
So I do think that we're going to improve in that
area.

MS. WATTENBERG: Thanks.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Ms. Lord and then

Mr. Contreras.

MS. LORD: Thank you so much and thank
you so much for being here. There are probably no two more contentious issues of concern in every community I have been to for a number of years. And I can't help but reflecting on our science students being here tonight and thinking they're the ones who are really going to solve these problems with their science and engineering skills, facilities, lead in the water.

So the bigger picture is what can we do to lay a better foundation. And my first question having suffered through the lead in the water crisis the first go round when they turned the taps off during the Valentine Day dance and didn't turn them on again until the kids had left school is -- will every water source in every school be tested? And is there going to be a sort of -- are we going to make this part of the routine?

You mentioned making schools that are healthy, safe and actually exciting to be in. The safety sort of things like we're lurching from oh wow, they tested high for lead and then
there's no process for not just communicating
with the parents, but for actually addressing it
in real time. So if there is sort of a big
picture plan, that would be great to know.

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Yes, absolutely.
In fact, thank you for asking that because I had
not -- so a couple of things. One is that we
test annually for lead in D.C. and we have in the
past and while we have done a terrible job of
communicating it, we were doing those tests and
seeing the results and making sure we were taking
action.

Going forward though, we are going to
do a much better job in that we have instituted a
bar coding system so that every drinkable water
source and these are the sources that are where
kids are, so this includes the science lab sink.
This includes the sinks in the classrooms. This
includes all the drinking fountains, now have a
bar code on them. And so part of this sampling
process is there's a whole tagging system that
goes on and then there's the sample, so you can
match the sample to the bar code. And we will be able to do that year over year. And so we'll be able to see that same water source and be really clear that it's that same water source and what was its level last year versus this year. And we didn't have the ability to do that in the past.

We also will need to have -- we will put in place a robust system to make sure that we are changing the filters because the filters are a permanent solution to having actual lead levels, but we need to change the filters or else that's not a permanent solution. And so once we get through this blitz of DCPS and DPR buildings this summer, we will be able to step back and say is the level of 15 parts per billion where we need it to be?

What's going to be our process to make sure -- right now we certainly have it scheduled, but how can we do this in a proactive way? How are we going to make sure that the communication protocols that we're using now we're always using so that DGS gets that information right to DCPS
and DCPS can share it with families.

So I think that there will also be the opportunity or let me say it this way. I will shape the opportunity so that we can get input from the community this summer about the longer term lead protocols and solutions.

MS. LORD: And what about the charter schools? Is this just the D.C. Public Schools?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: So the charter schools, PCSB actually hired a series of firms to make sure that all of the charter schools had given this information about their water results. And so they, too, have been testing and if they find actionable results quickly we're meeting them as well.

We're not seeing, as with DCPS, we're not seeing a health crisis. We're not seeing an aberrant number of actionable water sources, but it has been important to make sure that all of the schools have had this done. This is sort of our baseline. And now from here, we can make sure that we're doing it annually.
MS. LORD: And who is actually doing the testing. Are we sending our water samples to Virginia Tech's Marc Edwards' water quality lab the way Flint, Michigan and the way we did in 2007?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: I'd have to check. I actually don't know the names of the labs. I think that we're working with two or three. We're working with two. And perhaps not surprisingly, the volume that we're doing with 13,000 samples in 4 weeks and we're not even done yet. And given Flint and given some other places that are doing this, we needed to make sure that the folks who we're working with were ready for us and that are doing it as quickly as they can.

MS. LORD: So eventually, we may get to the point where every parent can go to a website and see what the water quality was, how it's improved, what the remediation was. We would be able to have that sort of transparency?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: And right now if you go to the DGS website, you can see the 12 or
15 schools that we already have the results up for and that has the transparency there. We will need to, if there are any actionable sources, we will also need to update even those documents after the retesting is done so that's illustrated. But right now, parents can have that information for those schools.

MS. LORD: I'll save my facilities questions for round two. Thank you.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you, Ms. Lord. We'll go with Mr. Contreras and then Ms. Anderson.

MR. CONTRERAS: Thank you. I have a few questions about the on-site blood testing at schools for students. So it says here that DGS found actionable levels of lead in 29 schools for drinking water and then in 21 schools for non-drinking water sources. But it says that on-site blood testing is only happening at 14 schools that had actionable results. What's the disparity there? Why are a number of schools like they have actionable results, but they're
not being provided with on-site testing?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Sure. So we are providing on-site testing to schools that we did not give timely results to the parents for. And so when a school -- if a school were to have actionable results, it is not typical that we then go and have all of the students screened. That's not usual for a number of different reasons, one of which is that over the last number of years, DOE has not found any case of elevated blood levels in a student to be linked to water in school. And it's actually the amount of water that you would need to drink to have an elevated level from water is very, very high and typically it would be a source that is the only source a child would get.

And from a school's -- when a student is in school, it is virtually impossible that they would only drink from one source at the school. They would have it at home. They would have it in different places.

So we wanted to -- because we had not
communicated with those families in a timely way, and the results were older, we wanted to make sure that those parents had a quick way to -- if they so chose, to have a blood screening done. And so we offered it to any of the 14 schools that we had not done that communication with and we've had three -- and we have two more on deck. And the other schools did not ask for the on-site screening.

And what we are also doing is providing four days for city wide for any parent in any school to get a free blood screening. The typical way, going forward, what we will do is we'll get annual screening -- excuse me. We'll get the water sampling results. We'll immediately send that out to families. If a family has a concern about their individual child, then they will actually go to their pediatrician or go directly to their primary care physician.

We will have for zero through six year olds, I think that DOE often has had
opportunities for city wide, but it will be the
typical way of doing it once we tell parents in a
timely way, have them go if they would like to,
to their primary care physician.

MR. CONTRERAS: So once we get results
for beyond the 57 schools that currently have
results up to the 116 total, will the option for
schools to take advantage of on-site testing be
made available to additional ones that are found
to have actionable levels that were previously
alerted?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Yes. So we are
offering the on site only to the 14 schools where
we did not communicate with parents in a timely
way. That's why we're doing the on site.
Because of the actionable levels, we do not worry
that there's a health crisis because we don't
have any evidence that there's a health crisis.
But we are providing the city wide so that any
parent of a student who goes to a school that has
an actionable level, even if we're giving them
that communication this spring right away, they
have the opportunity to have a blood screening.

MR. CONTRERAS: Okay, so beyond the 57 that we currently have results for, if other ones were found to have actionable levels of lead that hadn't been previously reported to the school and to the parents, there wouldn't be any I guess funding provided for on-site testing?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Thankfully, it's not a funding issue at all. We have found the funds. Thankfully, that's not a barrier at all. It's really when we communicate in a timely way with parents, the way that parents then follow up if they have concerns about their individual child is with their primary care physician.

The reason that we are not asking parents to only do that right now is because we have a crisis of confidence. We didn't do the right thing in terms of the communication and so to build parents' confidence and to make sure that they are not worried, we want to make sure that schools that didn't know that, even though some of our schools -- anyway, so that they -- if
we didn't communicate well, they have an easy way
to do the on-site screening.

But going forward for the blitz of
schools that we just did, because we are
communicating with them within 48 hours of
getting the results back, if not 24 hours, we are
not going to be providing on-site testing, excuse
me, on-site screening for students if a school
has actionable levels. But we are providing four
city-wide opportunities for any of those families
to go and get free screening.

MR. CONTRERAS: And where can families
find information about when and where those
screenings are?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Sure. So there's
a letter going home I think this week to every
DCPS parent about the blood screening and the
city-wide efforts. DOEE is also going to be
advertising and publicizing those four events.

I think I have it in front of me. I
can even list it for you right now. So Saturday,
May 21st from 9 to 1 at UDC East Capitol Urban
Farm. Saturday, June 4th at the truck touch.

Saturday, June 11th from 10 to 4 in Michigan Park. And Saturday, June 25th from 11 to 3, the Raymond Rec Center. This is in the email that I shared with the State Board of Ed members. So if you need a copy, we definitely -- I hope that if you -- please let me know if you didn't get it, just to make sure that you did.

Excuse me, the letter to all families went out today to all of the -- about the blood screening from DCPS to all DCPS families.

MR. CONTRERAS: Thank you.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: And thank you for that letter. It is on our website and folks can find at sboe.dc.gov as well.

We'll go now to Ms. Anderson from Ward 4 and then Ms. Wilson Phelan from Ward 1.

MS. ANDERSON: Good evening, and thank you for coming tonight. We really appreciate your coming and speaking to the Board about these matters.

I'd like to move to school
modernization issues, but in much of my thinking
about school modernization and about --
particularly in the District of Columbia, I rely
a lot on data that's been compiled by a number of
research institutes and think tanks, and others
who among them the 21st Century Schools fund
which published many of its other reports, a
review of the literature on the impact of school
facilities on student and teacher performance and
student and teacher satisfaction and a lot of
different aspects.

But in 2010, it published a report on
research on the impact of school facilities on
students and teachers and it was a summary of
studies published since 2000, the beginning of
the 21st century.

And it found, among many things, that
in schools with poor facilities, students
attended less days on average and therefore had
lower grades in ELA and math standardization
tests. Attendance was found to be a full
mediator for grades and grades in the English
Language Arts and a partial mediator for grades in math. It also found from a review of -- comprehensive review of the literature that there's a significant relationship between building condition and test scores, significant relationships between principal satisfaction, student satisfaction, teacher satisfaction, just a number of other factors.

And I noted that in the budget recommendations that were approved recently, the percentage of students that was considered at risk as defined -- and this is from the budget recommendations from DCPS, the percent of students considered at risk as defined by the Fair Funding Act of 2014 is no longer a bonus category and has been moved to the community category.

I'm wondering, what was the rationale for moving that out of that category -- at least basically kind of devaluing the criteria for student, overall student achievement at a school as a factor for -- devaluing that as a factor in
determining the -- I guess the ranking of a
school within the modernization list, the
priority list. That concerns me because at the
same time we are looking to focus and as the
State Board of Education we tend to focus -- we
look to focus on the lowest performing schools
and try and look at what we can do to turn those
schools around when really that seems kind of
counter intuitive that that consideration is not
being taken -- given as much weight as some other
factors in making a determination about whether
certain schools, perhaps some of the lowest
performing schools are not higher up on the list
of schools that are prioritized for
modernization.

Can you explain? Do you have any
ideas why that rationale -- can you give me some
justification for that rationale?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: It sounds like
the percentage changed from the administration's
set of criteria in sequencing to the Council's.
Unfortunately, I don't think I can describe the
Council's and it went from -- so I am in agreement that the percentage of at risk and special ed and ELL students is hugely important. So the administration had weighted that much greater than it ended up being in the Council's, but I think that as we look to go forward with the right set of criteria and I would describe it as tweaking at this point rather than fundamentally changing in any way, so I think that you would be an advocate for tweaking that component, if I'm hearing you correctly, going forward that that category have a higher weighting than it currently has.

MS. ANDERSON: Less tweaking, more twisting. I mean I'm a little more urgent and strident about it, I think, in terms of how that needs to be adjusted.

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Thanks for that feedback. The only other thing actually I wanted to mention is -- two things. One is that I was happy that we could work with the 21st Century Funds on their data because they're doing really
important work so that we can look at modernization.

The other thing, too, is that our office created a set of maps that show the CIP, the current one that we're going -- the CIP for '17 through '22, as well as what modernizations have happened for every school, for every DCPS school. So if you go to the mayor.dc.gov/fairshot under maps, you'll see that we have every single building, DCPS building, and what modernization it's had to date as well as some other key information about it. And the CIP, as the Mayor put forward, it actually has not -- when the budget is finally passed, if there are any adjustments, we'll make them then, at that time.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you, Ms. Anderson. Ms. Wilson Phelan, and then Mr. Jones.

MS. WILSON PHELAN: Thank you and I echo my colleagues in our appreciation for you coming tonight.
I think I want first speak to the fact that the one school where lead was found in Ward 1, the principal acted immediately and I think actually has assuaged many of the concerns of parents, so I just want to shout out her at Marie Reed in terms of really addressing the situation head on, and telling our parents what she is doing about that and can be a model for how we communicate in the future.

In talking about modernization, I know that the administration had heard lots and lots from Garrison and given that it resides in Ward 2, I'm going to leave that to my Ward 2 colleague to talk about. But any broader topic that does include the universe of Garrison where many Ward 1 residents go, I'd love to hear your thoughts on the value, the role of public input in the process of prioritization. Of course, every parent is going to advocate for his or her school to be modernized. And I recognize that that puts decision makers in a tricky position in terms of weighing public opinion.
At the same time, there have been a series of promises made, promises broken, as it relates to Garrison Elementary where I've seen in other schools in Ward 1 that hasn't been the case actually, where there has been pretty decent follow through and when things have had to change, there's been clear communication to the families. And I think that's been really critical for helping families understand why decisions are made that are made. And I'd just love to hear any thoughts that you have about how the public should weigh in on this process in an effective way where they can feel that their voices are heard.

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: So I think in many ways I'm sort of a systemic thinker, so the first piece is that we have criteria that is objective and transparent and then we follow that, so that's the first most important thing. And the extent that we hadn't done that in the past in a way that was transparent with the community, that that's a huge step forward.
Then I think the next question is how do we communicate once it's in the CIP and that it's from criteria and that it's been transparent about the specific project itself. And I think that that's where DCPS rethinking its CIP process, making sure and shifting it so that they're the accountable party for communication as well as decision is going to be key.

We certainly still have a far way to go. It would be great to know if folks have felt -- some school communities have reported to me that they have felt an improvement because of those two things. And I anticipate that we will only get better and better at that. So I think that having -- starting out with the right of transparent criteria, CIP, the right amount of money and then a clear process for the CIP, those are the structural pieces that we need in place and now we need to practice and now we need to use those repeatedly.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Mr. Jones and then I'll go.
MR. JONES: Thank you, Mr. President.

Deputy Mayor, I have a comment and also hopefully a suggestion. My comments are I know that you have one of the toughest jobs in this city. I've worked with many of the agencies and still do in my private life that you have to deal with. I also recall years ago when we couldn't get doors put up on schools on time.

So I want to commend you because I see it every day. You guys are doing a yeoman's job. You all are doing work light years ahead of what has happened before, so I have to commend you on the work that you guys are doing.

But I want to ask you a question or -- not a question, but what I'd like to see in line with my colleague's question from Ward 4, ideally, what I'd like to see and I know all across the city and every state and city deals with this issue, allocation of resources. I'd like to see more of it in the wards who are in desperate need and all too often, it is the political will of folks who have the will and the
influence and affluence to get things done that
get things done. And their schools are getting
modernized and I know you guys are trying to get
them done in Ward 7 and Ward 8. And then Ward 3
needs something and Ward 2 needs something, but
the individuals in Ward 2 and Ward 3 may have the
political influence. And I respect that. I
understand that.

But then there are some times those
that have must give up and must make a hard
decision and say we have to go without if it
takes a couple of years. And I know that's a
hard decision to make and put more of those
resources where they're needed. The gaps, not
only in education, are broadening. And I don't
live in 7 and 8. And I've been told over and
over, Mark, when you talk like that, you sound
like a socialist. I'm not even close to that.

We've got to do something different in
this city. And I just think we've got to think
bigger than that and those of us in wards where
we don't have the great need at this moment,
we've got to sacrifice. And I'd like to see the
administration make some hard decisions sometimes
and say look, the schools in Ward 7 need more.
The schools in Ward 8 need more. They need
modernization. They need better teachers. They
need everything. But we're talking about
modernization. That's what I'd like to see.

And I applaud you on having the -- I
don't know if it was your decision to have DCPS
be the point for modernization because I've seen
the process over and over, back and forth. And
DGS did a good job, but they're construction and
real estate people. And they attempted to
prioritize it based on education, but it's kind
of tough if that's not your field. I know that
because one of my companies we do construction.
And you do the best you can do, but you don't
have the data and the research whether it's
quantitative or qualitative to make a decision
that will benefit the citizens.

So ultimately, I would just like to
see the administration make hard decisions and
say look, we need to put more of our resources, a
greater amount in Ward 7, Ward 8, where it's
needed. And I know some of us in other wards may
not be happy about it.

And then we need to spread it out
because we all want our schools done today.
That's the reality, but we also know that that
cannot happen. One of the other citizens
testified and I appreciate their testimony about
the rainy day fund, but I worked in the
administration when we developed the rainy day
fund and I know the restrictions on it. So it's
not that easy. It's not like you can just go and
tap the rainy day fund and get money.

So I know you've got a tough task. I
understand it. I commend you. Kept up the good
work. But I'd like to see you spend -- the
administration focus more on the areas that are
in need.

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Thank you for the
commendation. I would say that I am pleased by
the progress, but I would also want to really
echo we are very far from where we need to get to be. So we have much more progress yet to go, certainly on modernization, let alone student achievement.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: After my questioning, we'll start back at Ms. Jolly. I don't think everyone will have a second round, but we'll do a briefer, four-minute round for follow-up questions. Please be brief if you can, board members.

I've got about two hours' worth of questions here. I'm going to compress as much as I can into the six minutes I have, so if you can be brief in your responses, I'd appreciate it.

I want to thank you, yet again for joining us this evening and for the relationship you've built with this Board. It's light years beyond what we've seen in past administrations and I echo Mr. Jones, you're are to be commended for it. Thank you for your support for FY '17 budget and for your monthly leadership meetings that you have with our vice president, myself,
and Mr. Hayworth. They're very much appreciated so that we can coordinate on district-wide education related initiatives.

So all of my colleagues have hit on the communications piece. And State Board members field a myriad of calls and emails about facilities in their ward and district wide and it continues -- communication continues to be a challenge for DCPS and DGS. Communications start late. Community expectations are not set early on and it's frequently unclear who is in charge.

In particular, we have Ellington School for the Arts in my ward which serves the whole city and a lot of Virginia and Maryland residents as well. It's over $100 million over budget. That school -- that application-only school, that elite, application-only school getting funded at that level means that neighborhood schools suffer. There's just not funding for everything.

So who is responsible when DGS does not meet a budget or deadlines and what are the
consequences for DCPS and DGS leadership who do not meet their obligations to our students and our communities?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: So we first need to make sure that we actually have a budget that matches what the design is. And so going forward, that's what we have done. We've made sure.

I don't know -- I have not studied all about -- I certainly know the broad strokes about Ellington and some of the specifics, but if it is like what I understand, many of the past projects, only a small fraction of the amount that it was actually going to cost was ever put in the budget knowing that it was going to have to be come up with at some other time. So first, we just need to get the budget number in the right ball park so that it begins to be accurate.

The second piece is making sure that we have a single point of decision making is going to be critical because where is the accountability in any of the decisions for any
projects going forward. That I see as being -- so it will be DCPS that is accountable.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Is that Dr. Beers? Is that the chancellor? Is that you?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: That's the chancellor and that's me. And so that combined with having revised ed. specs so that we are actually using the guidance from ed. specs, what I have understood happens -- has happened in different schools is that many additional programmatic things are added on and so while that can be a wonderful thing, it has allowed some projects to get bigger and bigger and part of the reason, the way I understand it is that by not having one single point of accountability, it grew without somebody saying no and without somebody saying this is what really needs to be.

So that, to me, is the value of streamlining and making clear who is accountable for the decisions relative to the building. And then DGS, needless to say, needs to perform within the parameters that DCPS has put out and
needs to follow best practice.

Construction is not a mystery --

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Right, this should be rather routine. We've been doing it for decades. Other districts do it and they do it very well. We've got a problem here in the city and we need to fix that problem. I'm glad you're working on it and we want to do whatever we can to support that work so that it's completed and so that folks are held accountable and that our students aren't suffering.

DCPS last developed an education master plan in 2006 and the capital commitment in 2012 sort of had an outline of an education master plan, but the city has changed dramatically in the last 15 years with the growth of the charter sector, in particular.

So would you be willing to undertake an initiative to develop a public dialogue aimed at a detailed education plan for all of the District's public schools?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: So the recent --
so I now chair a cross sector collaboration task force which your vice president sits on. And one of the five goals of that cross sector task force, the sectors being DCPS and public charter schools is looking particularly at facilities. And it's looking at the coordination of opening and closing and locating of buildings.

It is not a small hurdle for us or a small challenge for us to tackle, but the cross sector task force with it those five goals and in it specifically that facilities goal is going to provide us some guidance going forward about how our two sectors can work together towards a plan.

I think that there also is the master facilities plan which has a number of different components. It's very explicit about DCPS and city buildings and it is not -- and then it has some things about charter schools as well. So when we update that annually, that will be undertaken again in FY '18.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: I would encourage you to work on more than just guidance and
actually develop a long-term plan and I know that this Board would be eager to work with our communities and our constituents to make that a successful effort with the administration.

For FY '17, the administration allocated an additional $100 million for modernization of D.C. Public Schools, DCPS facilities and modernization, but did not provide equitable funding to increase per pupil facilities allowance for charter schools. Can you explain the administration's position and rationale and when will the charters be treated more equitably?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: So one of my chief goals is around equity across the sectors. And so I'm working in a number of different ways on that.

As you may know, one of the big ways that our two sectors experience inequity is that the way we pay schools is different and so I can come back at another time to describe further the LEA payment system that we will be putting in
place that will pay our LEAs the same way based on an actual number of students and based on multiple counts in one year so that if students leave an LEA or our students some to an LEA, the LEA either loses some money or gains some money. And that's to incent making sure that our LEAs are taking the spots that they have, filling the spots that they have.

In terms of the -- we have $78 million -- $76, sorry, of additional funds towards public education in the city. $46 million of that went to charter schools or will go to charter schools. The most important component of looking at the cost of schools going forward is the foundation amount and we were able to increase the foundation about by 2 percent in addition to anticipating the growth in both sectors.

The charter school facilities per pupil by statute is actually $3100 for FY '17. We actually are above that amount for FY '17. What we did do is last year we increased the foundation amount through the Council and then we
also gave them one-time grants to offset the fact that there wasn't a 2 percent increase on the overall foundation amount.

So part of the challenge is that we actually increase the facilities per pupil before we were statutorily required last year. And so this year, it still is above the statutory requirement and so -- but why it didn't increase from last year to this year is that we've, one, wanted to make sure that schools had enough money and that is the 2 percent on the foundation amount. And then we have many different priorities in the city and from solving homelessness and making it rare, a rare event to we wanted to make sure that we are tackling data systems at OSSE.

We wanted to make sure we have a number of different priorities across the city and so we did our best to reflect in a budget year, well, it seems like we should have lots and lots of funds with the tax triggers and other things. We actually only increased the size of
our budget from FY '16 to FY '17 by 3 percent as a government. It's the lowest percentage increase we've had in the last six years of any administration. And so because we were living within those constraints, unfortunately, we couldn't give everything to everybody, but it certainly is important for our schools to have the money that they need. And I was pleased that we were able to have $46 million of the $78 go towards charters in the city.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you, and we'll looking forward to working with you and the administration to find other perhaps creative ways to continue to assist to make sure that we bring equity across the system.

We'll go now again if folks have another short four-minute round to Ms. Jolly first and then Mr. Weedon. None from Ms. Jolly, so Mr. Weedon and then Ms. Wattenberg.

MR. WEEDON: Thank you. One more quick point on lead. Any level of lead in our water is unacceptable. We need filters installed
if there is a test of below 15 parts per billion
and we need to ensure that all of our water is
safe. And I know that's not where the
environmental assessment EPA guidelines are, but
that will truly restore confidence from our
parents that we're being proactive and that we're
putting the health of our students first.

On school modernizations, I agree the
goal must be safe, healthy, and adequate learning
environments for all. And I also agree that we
need to focus more on the areas of the city that
need it the most. I'd love to see a data-driven
environmental assessment of our schools. We
don't have that. The rankings that we're looking
at, building condition and educational
effectiveness are not, at least to my knowledge,
based on any clear, transparent data. And
further, we need to increase the weight that we
give to that column in the CIP.

I'd also like to counter a little bit,
I congratulate and acknowledge the Mayor added
$220 million in FY '17 into the CIP, the Capital
Improvement Plan. But if I have my numbers right and I get these from Councilmember Allen's office, in the FY '16 capital budget, also under Mayor Bowser, the capital budget was reduced by $330 million over five years. Ward 6 alone lost $125 million in the FY '16 CIP.

So yes, we put some money back. We're not where we were just one year ago. And that's what's pushing many of these renovations out further.

You talked about three improvements and I'll get to a question here in a moment. Sufficient funds in the plans. Clear process for the CIP, and clear prioritization for the Capital Improvement Plan that's clear and transparent.

We've heard from our friends here today, Capitol Hill Montessori at Logan about the problems there. Utilization rates at Watkins are not accurate because enrollment and building capacity numbers I don't believe are accurate. At Maury Elementary, the Capital Improvement Plan talks about it being a full
modernization. We're not touching the common
spaces in the proposal that's currently before
the CIP. It's not a full modernization. And in
fact, at Maury, the amount put forward is
essentially to replace four portable classrooms
with six permanent classrooms. That's inadequate
for the school two years from now, let alone in
three years when that will actually open.

We can talk a lot about the objective
and transparent criteria, but those objective and
transparent criteria were not developed with
adequate community input. And I just would like
to hear your thoughts on how the community was
involved in that process and what you heard from
the community as you developed these four areas
of demand, equity, student demand, neighborhood
population, building condition, and educational
effectiveness and what you heard from the public
around how you weighted these criteria.

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Sure. Let me
respond in a couple of ways. I'm not sure I have
all of the information. Let me actually just
start with the CIP '16 versus '17.

One of the things that the administration has to work within the budget, the debt cap. And so when you look at '16, the '16 through '21 versus the '17 through '22, the decrease was actually not because it was literally decreased. It was actually the debt cap wouldn't allow as much funding for schools in that. And one of the things that we have is this sort of choke hold, if you will, on an FY '19 where we have a particularly low amount of money that we can use which is one of the reasons that it's sort of making it difficult to make all of the projects happen because we can't start them in '18. We have to start them in '19 because of this. So one is just the structure of the debt cap and the maximum that we have dictates quite a lot. And it changes from year to year so every time we get a new out year, it changes the amount.

You had asked about the full modernization. So the full modernizations are
going forward. And I'm trying to look quickly to see -- Mr. Weedon, do you mind just restating the question that you had again?

    MR. WEEDON: Well, really what I want to get at and I'm happy to sit offline and talk about the different schools, but I think there's a lot of questions about the data that's been used, where that data comes from, is it accurate and how these four categories and the subcategory weights were developed.

    DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Great. Thank you for reminding me. So Maury, the full modernization is going forward. Maury is in the middle, so it is actually not getting a full modernization. So I would not characterize it as a full modernization.

    MR. WEEDON: That's how the CIP characterizes it though. If you look at the line. Is it full, partial? It's listed as a full modernization.

    DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Let me go back and check.
MR. WEEDON: Maybe that's an error in the data and again, that gets back to the point of is the data and how we're characterizing it, is it accurate.

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: And you can share with me which document you're looking at so I can make sure.

In terms of how we determined -- so DCPS did a series of -- gained community input on the CIP criteria and the weightings. I will need to get back to you, the process that they used. It took place last fall and I don't, unfortunately remember off the top of my head how the different components that they put into it.

MR. WEEDON: So I can say I did not receive or hear anything about that and I'm seeing Ward 6 family members shake their heads in the audience here. There was not a robust process around that.

And I'm going to push a little bit more on the Maury renovation. One, my children attend. They'll be graduating and moving on to
Eliot-Hine. The renovation there is not going to impact me, but I am really concerned there that we're wasting resources.

Currently in the budget, my understanding is any unspent '16 money, the FY '17 allocation, there's about $16, $18 million there for Maury. And the proposal on the table is DCPS has shared two or four drawings with the community. The other two have not been shared and I'd ask your help in getting those documents to the Maury community and the CIP process there.

And the rationale that they haven't been shared has been we can't fulfill the promises in them. And I don't think anybody wants those promises fulfilled. They want to know what the concepts were so that they can take the best from those to inform what we're actually trying to do.

Essentially, the plan, as it is written, and I have a copy of the CIP proposal right here in front of me, is to replace four modular classrooms with six permanent classrooms
and do some other work to make that happen.

This year at Maury, only four of our 4th graders won a ticket in the lottery and will be leaving, so we'll have close to 40 5th graders returning, the second year in a row that we'll have two 5th grade classes which is fabulous. Except we don't have a classroom for that second 5th grade next year. That's one classroom.

The year after, we expect our 2nd grade to become 3rd grade and retained. We'll need a third 3rd grade classroom that year. That's two classrooms.

In this year's early ed. program or pre-K-3 students, we have 70 in-boundary families. Only about 30 of them are getting in. There's 40 more. If any of those students show up in two years when the modernization is slated to open, that's another classroom.

We're doing the math here. We're building two new classrooms. We need one more, two more, three more and that's a conservative estimate. The funding in the plan is not
adequate. And this gets back to the data driven approach. I've been saying this for two years, that the enrollment estimates for Maury with the expanded boundaries are not accurate. DCPS has not engaged the community. And I could go through the same exercise around Jefferson, Eliot-Hine, and Capitol Hill Montessori at Logan and others. And we need the community involved in this process.

And you talked about the reformed CIP process. The CIP needs to meet and talk about what the needs are of the full community before we come up with these dollar amounts. Yes, a certain amount of renovations should be driven based on the ed. specs, but as we look at Eliot-Hine and the $85 million that's proposed there, that renovates the whole school. Well, the school proposed enrollment is only 480 students. The school right now has the capacity for 800. So we need to make sure that the community is involved in the planning before we come up with these numbers and that the numbers make sense for
the community not just the school.

MS. WILSON PHELAN: I'm just going to say one thing and I won't talk later because this is the same situation in Ward 1 where you see the demand for DCPS schools growing.

My understanding from an informal conversation with DCPS is that the planning numbers didn't actually take into account what the wait lists are saying about demand for DCPS schools until Dr. Beers took over, but all of the modernizations were already en route and the plans for them were en route and schools that are being modernized in Ward 1. And so my worry is that we'll have this incredible demand for neighborhood schools which we deeply want. And continue to push out families who want to attend.

Now I know by right, a kindergartner may get to go, but for example, Bancroft had a fair wait list for in-boundary for pre-school/3 and 4. And when that was mentioned to Dr. Beers, that was the first he had heard of it.

So I know that is making changes to
incorporate the information now, but my worry is
are we building these buildings that won't meet
the needs of the communities and even four or
five years from now we'll end up with trailers
again when we just went through this incredible
modernization with lots of money and beautiful
building space.

So I think actually 6 and 1 are in
similar situations there, so I just wanted to
emphasize that and you might have insight into
how the planning process has been adjusted since
that leadership change has taken over.

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: So I can go back
and look more at Maury. As I mentioned coming
here tonight, unfortunately the specifics of
every school is not at my fingertips as has been
illustrated already, I think. And so we can go
back and better understand --

MR. WEEDON: And I appreciate that,
but again, I would ask for as these numbers are
being developed or before they're finalized in
the FY '17 budget, that we engage each of the
communities and ask the question does this plan on the surface, we're not going to all be happy with the timing of it, but does this plan make sense for the community.

And there are a number of communities in Ward 6 that I would say will answer that question no. Some will probably say there's more money here than we probably need. Others will -- and they'll gladly spend it, don't get me wrong. Others will say no, what we're proposing does not meet the needs of our immediate in-boundary neighborhood. And if that's the goal to have neighborhood schools, we have to make sure that we're planning long term and not wasting resources.

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: I agree.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Did you want a moment to respond?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: I agree.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you. Ms.

Wattenberg and then Ms. Lord.

MS. WATTENBERG: Just to add one more
fact to the fact story here. My kids were in DCPS in three different schools. Every single school got renovated that they were going through which I'm very happy for and every single one of them was substantially over capacity on the day that the school was fixed, on the day that the school reopened. So it's just more evidence that this issue of how do we account for the population really needs to be looked at.

The only thing I want to say is as you do your job in the many ways that you do it, I think this issue of community input and the level of respect that's given to the opinions, the ideas, the facts, the realities that people in the communities can put on the table, it's a huge issue in operations.

I mean we saw it most recently in the budget hearings around the schools that were told that they're going to have adopt a particular kind of professional development program that may or may not have taken account of their particular needs and priorities and the way it would impact
other programs in the schools.

Sometimes programs will be put in schools with DCPS funds and that's fine to try them out. And then the school will be told well now you're going to have this program and you have to pay for it and the school has to take money from other programs and so on and so on.

We had an issue recently with the Park Test where kids were being told to take the test even though there seemed to be rules that would suggest they shouldn't be taking the test and we couldn't clarify, we could never get clarity for the families about who should take them.

So I'm just saying as you think about this community input issue and the community responsiveness issue, I hope you think about it as well on the operation side and create some easier ways for everybody to have input so that better decisions get made. That's really the point. And when parents have these issues say around Park, there's a way to get answers back that reflect the seriousness of the issue.
MS. LORD: Is there a response? I'm the second in command because I'm the oldest serving or longest serving. Is that it?

Well, we have a bit of a dilemma since obviously the next one would be questioning. So I will take the opportunity first to thank you for the support for this Board. It really helps us do our job if we have sufficient resources to do it, particularly for our ombudsman and student advocate.

I also want to put you on the spot just a little bit because as a school leader, you have been through a number of school renovations and brand new schools yourself. And I'd like to kind of tap the accountability issue that I've heard and ask you what lessons you learned that we could possibly apply to the broader school modernization issue?

And then to kind of rant just a little bit, my local school, School Without Walls at Francis-Stevens, we had a parent here tonight, Mr. Hendricks. It's bait and switch, it's
promise, but there's been -- the most
disappointing thing is this was a school that was
slated for closure because it was under enrolled.
It is now thriving. It has doubled in size.
There are students in kindergarten who are
learning Latin. It's everything we want it to
be. And so when they've developed a program that
would teach students to cook the produce. They
would have celebrity chefs come in and learn
actually how to cook the produce that they're
growing in the garden and live healthy, all the
things we want. They worked with FoodPrints.
They had a curriculum. They had a partner all
set up and the cafeteria needed modernization. A
cafeteria. We're not talking about a big thing.
And yet, it didn't come. It didn't happen. And
then it had to be sped up and then all the money
got eaten away in overtime.

And it's just like there are brand new
high schools that have been built by charter
schools for $50 million, a third of what
Ellington is going to cost. Now granted it's
apples to apples, but we're just not getting much
bang for our buck.

So between your experience as someone
who has created two extremely exciting learning
environments and this sort of lack of programming
input before the stuff gets started, what can we
take away to make sure that we have not just
transparency, not just community input, but some
ture bang for our buck? Thank you.

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Sure. So I think
just in terms of what I had learned in coming to
this, I talked about them a little bit or a lot
already. The single point of accountability,
that was one of the first things that was clear
to me was vital to the success of the projects
that I had worked with. And then when we saw it
both on the decision making for program as well
as communication, that seemed like a really clear
step forward.

The second is the ed. specs and so
having a clear understanding of program and then
modifying it, rather than through starting with a
blank slate and just adding on. So those are key things that from my experience doing facilities coming to this.

In terms of -- you'd also asked, sorry, the last part you had just -- I should be taking notes.

MS. LORD: It's basically how do we get out of the sort of mode of promises and getting more bang for our buck.

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: So one of the other things that we need to do and that we are going to do a better job and have been doing a better job at DGS is planning. And so we probably should not have promised to get that kitchen done because we did not actually have all of the different pieces figured out and it wasn't -- while we certainly have many organizations that can do construction on a dime.

DGS is actually doing huge volumes of construction. And so adding an additional piece outside of the typical planning process and estimating that it would take far shorter a
period of time and was far less complex than it actually was. So the cafeteria, if my memory serves me was one piece of it, but it actually was the special cooking -- I don't know if we would call it a training room, that was another piece of it.

So DGS under Admiral Weaver is also working much better at being able to say yes, this is what we can do. This is how long it's going to take. This is how much it costs in a way that I think is different than in the years past. I think that we actually create a market for construction in the city because of the volume that we're doing around modernization that is unusual. Not many cities -- we create a crunch because we actually are so flat out, doing so many modernizations across the city.

So we have to be really thoughtful about making sure, even if it's adding something that's seemingly small, how does it fit into the bigger picture and then be really clear with the community about what's possible. And so I think
that -- and not have the expectations not be met. 
So working really hard to make sure that that's
clear.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you, Ms. 
Lord. We'll go with Mr. Contreras, and then Ms. 
Andersen.

MR. CONTRERAS: Thank you. I was 
wondering what the public process is for 
developing that spec and then what role students 
can have in that process and families in general?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: That's great. 
I'll need to get back to you on that. It's not 
something that I -- anyway, I don't remember off 
the top of my head and we'll get back to you on 
both of those questions.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. 
Contreras, are you finished? Wonderful.

Ms. Andersen.

MS. ANDERSON: I'm going to go a 
little ward specific here, but a lot is said 
within the CIP narrative about the need to 
eliminate or reduce the impact of politics in the
modernization decision-making process, but many
of the people in my ward from what I hear from
people in my ward is that particularly with
regards to Coolidge High School that there seems
to be a lot of politics at play that keep moving
that time line for renovating that school,
modernizing that school further and further back
from what it was when the first -- some of the
first modernization plans were put forth that
Coolidge was very high on the list of
modernization.

On the one hand I think it's a little
bit disingenuous that there's a need to talk
about reducing politics as a measure, but how do
you address folks who feel that politics is being
played by the cyclical kind of maneuvering that
kind of keeps pushing Coolidge further and
further down and changing the budget for the
school modernization to the point where I now
believe that school is slated for modernization
in 2022 which that means -- there's some politics
at play.
Is there anything that can be done to address that and perhaps take into consideration that politics has basically been one of the main things it seems that keeps moving that school further and further down the list?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: So --

MS. ANDERSON: What kind of politics are we trying to eliminate here?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: So forgive me. I don't think that I said we were trying to eliminate politics. That's not the way I've experienced this.

MS. ANDERSON: I'm just looking at the narrative for the budget.

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: I'm not disagreeing. So one of the things about Coolidge that is hard is that (a) we know we have a priority of completing our high schools, so we need to make sure that Coolidge and Banneker and then Washington Met also get renovated.

The hard thing about Coolidge, too, is that it's a very large amount of money and so one
of the challenges is that I describe in FY '19 we dropped to nearly only $100 million available for renovation for modernization instead of the $3 and $4 million that we have had every year. And so thinking about how to renovate Coolidge in a way that is in continuous years in a three or four year period, combine that with the restrictions on the way that the debt cap works, that's actually what I've experienced being the challenge for Coolidge in the budget that I've seen.

I can't speak to the past, unfortunately, that's not -- I don't have a lot of knowledge about what has happened to Coolidge until this point, but one of the priorities was -- and right now it's not Coolidge will be completed in 2020 and 2022. It will be started in '17. It will be started in '17 and completed in '19, probably -- this is why I'm not -- I can get back to you on exactly when it was -- my experience of the challenge has been the amount of money that it takes to renovate our high
schools is often two and three times more than renovating an elementary school. And so that's part of the pieces. It's this big giant puzzle of putting together how much money we have, where the priorities are and we really need to get it all done.

MS. ANDERSON: I think another concern is the longer that renovation and modernization is deferred, the worse the conditions become in a school. So you're not going to see any savings by deferring that renovation further and further down the line because the school continues to deteriorate the physical facility.

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Just to be -- we are starting in an FY '17 and let me just see if -- where it tells me when it's going to finish -- and if it's finishing in '19 or in '20.

Great. It's going to be finished in '19, both from what the Mayor put in and from what Council put in.

MS. ANDERSON: What year?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: '19. So we're
doing it starting next year.

MS. ANDERSON: Thank you.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you, Ms. Anderson. Mr. Jones and then I will conclude.

Thank you, Mr. Jones.

Then I will conclude. I do have a couple of really brief questions, but I don't want to forget to thank you yet again for spending so much time and for being so generous with your time. If board members have additional questions or questions that are specific to their wards, could we compile written questions by let's say close of business Friday, colleagues, for your office to respond to? Wonderful. Thank you.

I think my colleague, Ms. Wilson Phelan, also touched on Garrison. As you know, Garrison is receiving a partial modernization. Is it my understanding from your testimony that Garrison and Maury are sort of in that same boat where they're in the middle and neither will receive a full modernization?
DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Yes, and you want to have other friends -- Hyde-Addison and Bruce-Monroe are also in that category.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you.

Thank you for clarifying that. I do see that the field work is finally being completed and that the field for Garrison should be -- I just received an email from the CIP coordinator today that the field should be operational by August and usable by students and community members and we appreciate that very much.

The very first thing you said was that the health of our students is the most important thing. We're going into a discussion which also includes score report cards. And you know how much I love health and one of my big pushes is more health data for families to make informed choices. Things like maybe the lead water testing from the different schools to make sure that that is transparent at the school that the child goes to rather than a DGS website that a family might not know about. Does that make
sense to you to have all of that data in one place about a school, rather than having families have to hunt and peck?

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Well, thankfully, I think that we've figured out how there's a link so there's no hunting and pecking. I think we can confirm, but you can go to the DCPS website. You can go to the City Administrator's website. You can go to the DME's website and you can go to DGS and the link automatically takes you to the same place. And it's housed at DGS, so I don't think that thankfully there should be a challenge if a parent goes on line to find those results.

I think the key is -- and it wasn't happening before is that DCPS needed to know the results, so that DCPS could be communicating with those families and so that they're communicating directly and then making it very easy for parents to find out. And so I think that's absolutely critical.

To me, I don't actually think it matters where it lives if there's a quick link
that takes you to that same place because I don't
want parents to hunt and peck. I don't want them
to -- so as long as it's simple and clear and you
certainly can go to the DCPS website and find out
exactly how to get there. And some may not know
that they're tapping and going to the DGS website
as opposed to another page on the DCPS website.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Terrific. Thank
you. And my colleague, my smartest colleague,
Brian Contreras, has already alluded to this.
DCPS is revising ed. specs and you've talked
about that as well. We certainly want to get
that student voice, but DCPS' community action
team has reached out to some of the education
networks to ask them to help with focus groups to
get that conversation started, so that it really
is a true community conversation on what these
new ed. specs will look like.

Is that moving forward? Is that
delayed? What is the status of that? I think I
received an email from Elias Hoffman who is the
Ward 2-3 CAT coordinator maybe 2 or 3 weeks ago
and we would love for that process, once it's all finalized to move forward so that we can participate in helping make sure that these reflect the equity and the needs of the communities.

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: So I can confirm that we're in the middle of the community piece for the ed. specs and that they are going to various ed. councils in the wards. And so I can see if I can get you more detailed information, but echoing that and just getting back confirmation of that.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Terrific. Then I will follow up with him. He hadn't responded to my email and I thought maybe you had him waiting until this meeting. So I will follow up directly with him. Thank you.

MR. WEEDON: Could you just make sure that all the wards are involved in that process. I know our community would love to be a part as well.

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: What I can do is 

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MR. WEEDON: And we've heard nothing, so --

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Yes, let me find out what the process is and share that. I don't know DCPS' plan, but we will connect with them and let you all know.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you, Deputy Mayor. Board members, please have any additional follow-up questions compiled by close of business Friday and we will get those over to Shane, if that's appropriate and I apologize. I've got quite a few from various schools as others do as well. With that, thank you. You have our appreciation for spending so much time with us this evening.

DEPUTY MAYOR NILES: Great. Happy to be here.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: And with that, do board members have any special announcements before we adjourn?

Ms. Wattenberg, Ms. Lord?
MS. WATTENBERG: Hi. I just want to announce to our audience, to our public audience that on Wednesday, June 1st at 6:30 at McKinley High School, there's going to be a session called Why Knowledge Matters, the Need for a Rich Curriculum from the Earliest Years. The featured speaker is Daniel Willingham who is a cognitive scientist which is a fancy name of talking about the scientists who understand the new brain science and how our brains learn. And he's going to be talking about what the emerging science in this field says about the importance of understanding history, science and the arts, in order to read, understand, and think critically. And this is, of course, extremely important to understand as we consider our literacy policies so that we don't go too narrow in our curriculum. So I encourage everybody to come Wednesday, June 1st, 6:30 p.m. McKinley High School. It's co-sponsored by the State Board, by SHAPE (phonetic), by the Deputy Mayor's Office, by the Charter Board, by DCPS, D.C. Immersion, and I
hope I'm not missing anybody. Thank you.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you, Ms. Wattenberg. Ms. Lord?

MS. LORD: Thank you very much. I want to thank everybody for this spirited discussion on a wide ranging amount of issues and it brings home just how important science, technology, engineering, and math is to solving the world's problems locally and globally. Surprisingly, many of our jobs in the city are related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Even as we celebrated tonight's outstanding science scholars, I hope everybody will join me in celebrating our youngest scientists and engineers. The city-wide elementary STEM fair is June 4th at Takoma Education Campus.

I've signed up to be a judge. I'm not sure whether I will actually be chosen, but it's a great way to see the future brainiacs at work and to really support them and to show them that what they're doing as science fair projects know
that they count, they have value. They're valid learning experiences and I don't think we can say that enough. So thank you very much and I hope to see you June 4, Takoma Elementary Education Campus.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Thank you, Ms. Lord. Any final thoughts? If not, I would entertain a motion to adjourn.

MS. WATTENBERG: So moved.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Moved by Ms. Wattenberg. Is there a second?

MS. WILSON PHELAN: Second.

PRESIDENT JACOBSON: Second by Ms. Wilson Phelan. All in favor, say aye.

(Chorus of ayes.)

And we stand adjourned.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 8:18 p.m.)
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This is to certify that the foregoing transcript

In the matter of: Public Meeting

Before: DC State Board of Education

Date: 05-18-16

Place: Washington, DC

was duly recorded and accurately transcribed under my direction; further, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

[Signature]
Court Reporter