



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** D.C. State Board of Education Members  
**From:** SBOE Staff  
**Date:** January 10, 2019  
**Subject:** Teacher and Principal Retention Recommendations & Synthesis of Small Group Discussions from Public Forum

### Background

In May 2018, the D.C. State Board of Education (SBOE) contracted with local education researcher and data analyst Mary Levy to produce [a report](#) on teacher and principal retention in the District of Columbia. Following the production of the report in October 2018, SBOE held a series of engagement efforts around the report's findings and to identify solutions to retention issues in the District. These engagement efforts included:

- Hosting over 15 witnesses at the October 24, 2018 public meeting;
- Welcoming nearly 100 teachers, principals, community members, and policy makers to a public forum on teacher and principal retention at Walker-Jones Education Campus on November 28, 2018; and
- Soliciting feedback in December 2018 via an online platform on the potential solutions suggested at the public forum, which was viewed by over 450 unique visitors who provided more than 200 votes on the potential solutions.

At this time, the SBOE has synthesized the comments, feedback, and suggestions of the nearly 600 individuals who have actively engaged on the topic of teacher and principal retention in the District of Columbia into potential policy recommendations and actionable next steps.

### Policy Recommendations

The work of SBOE and EmpowerEd, a teacher advocacy organization, over the past two months has produced a list of more than 30 possible solutions to address retention in the District. Items on this robust list of suggestions can be directed to the mayor, the Council, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), and charter local education agencies (LEAs).

Below are four major themes that were captured and received the most attention (i.e., votes via the online platform and during the public forum) through our engagement efforts, as well as the policy recommendations and next steps the State Board should consider pursuing. The below themes are not listed in order of priority or sequenced as unique items.



❑ **Data and research** - capture annual data on teachers, principals, and school leaders (e.g., preparation, demographic, experience, reasons for entry and exit of the classroom/school, etc.) so that all public schools have consistent and comparable information to better understand their staff.

- **RECOMMENDATION:** Draft a proposal to establish a statewide database on teacher movement, explicitly stating the data points and items that should be included in the system and the reasons as to why they must be captured. Call on the District to ensure the collection of annual data is thoughtful, not overly burdensome for entities involved, and ethical. Identify the most appropriate way for collection of data (i.e., in-person or electronically, usage of surveys or other data gathering mechanisms). Ensure that said data is publicly accessible.
- **DIRECTED TO:** OSSE, Office of the D.C. Auditor

❑ **Logistics and human resources** - investment in programs and incentives to make the jobs of teachers, principals, and school leaders more attractive.

- **RECOMMENDATION:** Draft a letter and/or produce a research report related to successful professional development models and incentive-based initiatives that both attract and retain teachers (e.g., tax credits, student loan repayment, housing stipends or direct housing, family-centered benefits/programs, shorter retirement incentive plan, sabbaticals). Reference previous research studies, exemplar districts, cities, and states, and provide model legislation, as well as specific regulatory language to be considered. Request additional research on specific models and incentive-based initiatives (as necessary) to ensure complete understanding of scope and impact of each initiative considered.
- **DIRECTED TO:** Executive Office of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor of Education, Council of the District of Columbia

❑ **Empowerment and distributed leadership** - recognition of the accomplishments of teacher and school-based staff, their desires for progression, growth, and advancement opportunities, and the educational expertise that makes them capable of being effective decision-makers.

- **RECOMMENDATION:** Outline a series of research-backed and effective strategies and professional development opportunities that schools and LEAs may implement to ensure that teachers and school-based staff are:
  - prepared for addressing all types of issues—especially those that extend beyond the classroom (e.g., hunger, trauma, violence);
  - mentored when needed, requested, or required—especially individuals who are early teachers, underperforming teachers, and administrators;



- supported through different staffing models and/or collective leadership models if they choose to take on additional responsibilities; and
- empowered and trusted to make school-level decisions in an efficient and autonomous manner, with the scheduling flexibility desired.

- ***DIRECTED TO:*** DCPS and charter LEAs

□ ***High-stakes testing*** - reducing the emphasis on high-stakes testing in evaluating student and teacher success.

- ***RECOMMENDATION:*** Understanding that the District's statewide test (PARCC) and teacher evaluation system (IMPACT) will not be drastically overhauled or eliminated overnight, encourage state education agencies to use PARCC differently. Call on DCPS to examine how IMPACT actually benefits students, allows for teachers to improve, and ensure highly effective teachers stay in the classroom. Continue to push for the implementation of the High School Graduation Requirements Task Force recommendation on competency-based waivers that would allow students to show mastery of core content through experiences and knowledge gained outside of traditional channels.
- ***DIRECTED TO:*** OSSE



## **Appendix: Strategies to Address Retention (*as identified during the public forum*)**

During the November 28, 2018 public forum, small groups discussed strategies to address teacher and principal retention. Below the strategies to address retention—as discussed by the small groups—are grouped into five areas: (1) teacher support, (2) human resources, (3) school-led policy, (4) data and research, and (5) school climate. Each of these strategy areas addresses a theory of change that SBOE believes must occur to address teacher and principal retention in the District. The below strategies are not listed in order of priority or sequenced as unique items.

☐ **Teacher Support** - strengthen the support structures around teachers in schools. Provide resources to make teachers’ day-to-day experience easier and increase their effectiveness. Make the role of the teacher “more do-able.”

- **Mentorship**
  - Develop and improve mentorship programs for early teachers, underperforming teachers, and administrators
- **Professional development**
  - Allow teacher input on professional development, content, and frequency
  - Provide trauma-informed professional development for teachers
  - Implement system-wide weekly half-day professional development
- **Progression and advancement**
  - Provide opportunities for career advancement: create a career ladder for teachers to develop, building their skills and taking on new responsibilities as “teacher leaders.”
  - Provide pathways for teachers to stay in the classroom even through life changes, like offering part-time opportunities and scheduling flexibility.

☐ **Human Resources** - improve hiring practices to improve retention. Value teachers more. Attract quality candidates into schools. Provide real incentives to stay (beyond intrinsic motivation).

- **Pre-hiring, recruitment**
  - Provide non-salary-based incentives (e.g., workforce housing, tax credits, student loan repayment)
  - Improve teacher residency programs to include models like “grow your own” programs.



- Reconsider staffing models and increase staffing in schools
- **Once hired, ongoing support**
  - Implement 3-year teacher/principal contracts
  - Maintain non-salary-based incentives
  - Ensure people-oriented and family-centered benefits

▣ **School-Level Policy** - the policies that control day-to-day operations within a school or classroom are vital to the success of students and teachers.

- **Change high-stakes testing procedures**
  - Reduce emphasis on PARCC
  - Rate teachers and schools based on growth (not proficiency), so that the focus is non-punitive and on equity, training, and investment
- **Empower teachers and school leaders**
  - Empower administrators/heads of school/principals on budget, staffing decisions including hiring and firing, student discipline, academics, and school goals
  - Promote autonomy of schools, principals, and classrooms
  - Reduce the administrative burden on teachers (i.e., paperwork, data entry)
- **Scheduling flexibility and innovative teaching models/structures**
  - Provide flexible schedules and roles that promote work-life balance (e.g., teachers who start a family are able to stay in the classroom), allow for observation of colleagues.
  - Encourage the implementation of diverse teaching models (e.g., co-teaching) and hybrid teacher/coaching roles.
  - Expand initiatives like DCPS' Teacher Leadership Innovation (TLI) model and programs that allow teachers release time to take on a leadership role without leaving the classroom.

▣ **Data and Research** - research and data on teachers is needed from all public schools in a consistent and comparable format.

- **Annual reporting**
  - Require annual data reporting on report cards that uses consistent demographic information (e.g., race, education level, gender, income, the pipeline in which they used to enter the profession)
- **Common definitions**



- Establish common definition of retention
- Establish common definition of teacher/educator, administrator/head of school/principal
- **Exit surveys**
  - Develop and implement exit survey that captures non-identifiable information for all teachers who exit the classroom in both sectors

☐ *School Climate* - make school a good place to be. Teachers are less likely to seek a new work environment if they feel a connection with their current one.

- **Transparent, two-way communication**
  - Implement communication practices that honor and increase teacher voice
- **Access to resources**
  - Ensure that teachers and staff can actively utilize area resources without heavy administrative burdens, in order to implement innovative lessons (e.g., museum visits and trips)
- **Distributed leadership and more recognition**
  - Provide distributed leadership for teachers so they have opportunities to take on more responsibility
  - Celebrate achievements and recognize milestones

