

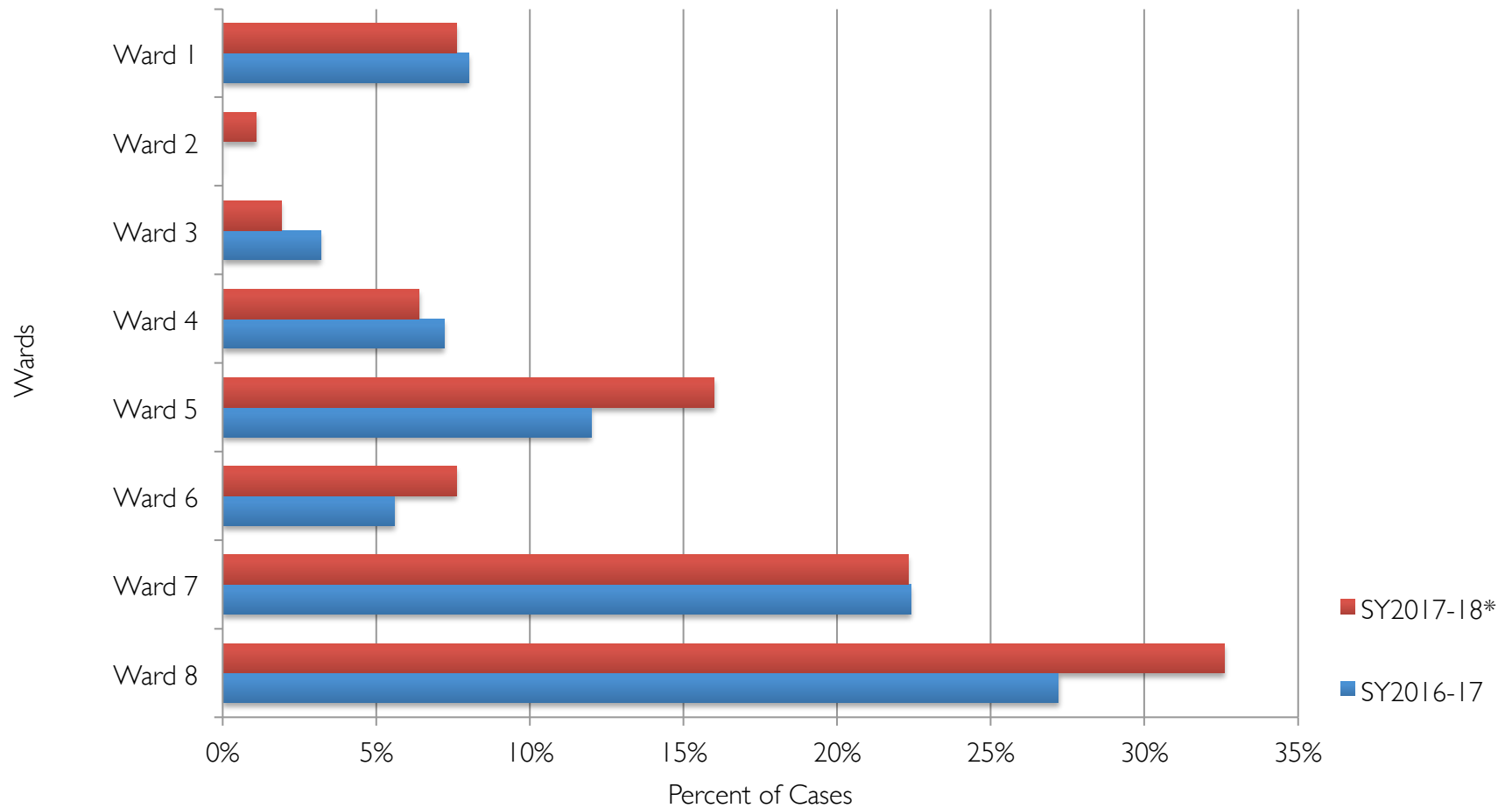
Office of the Ombudsman for Public
Education
Quarter 1 and 2 Report
School Year 2017-18

DC Office of the
Ombudsman
for Public Education



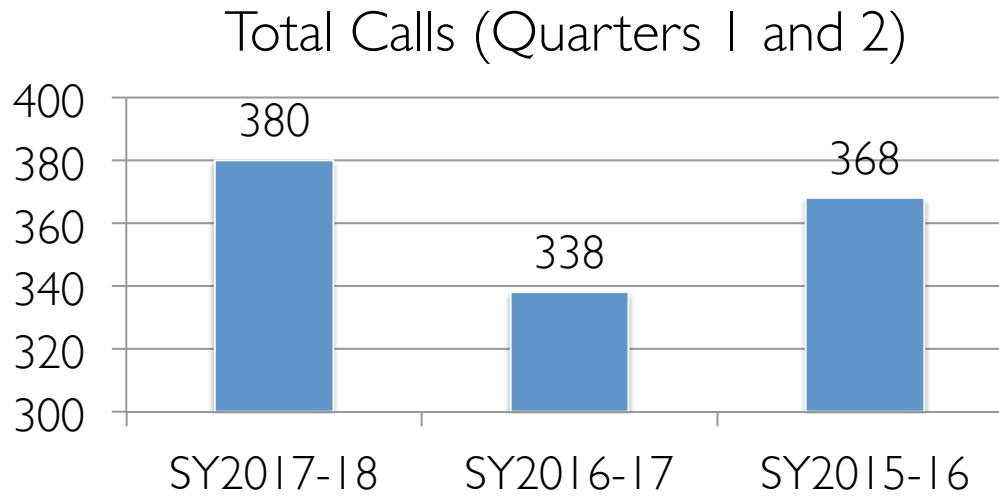
Cases by Ward

Percent of Cases in Each Ward for Q1-2 SY2017-18 compared to SY2016-17

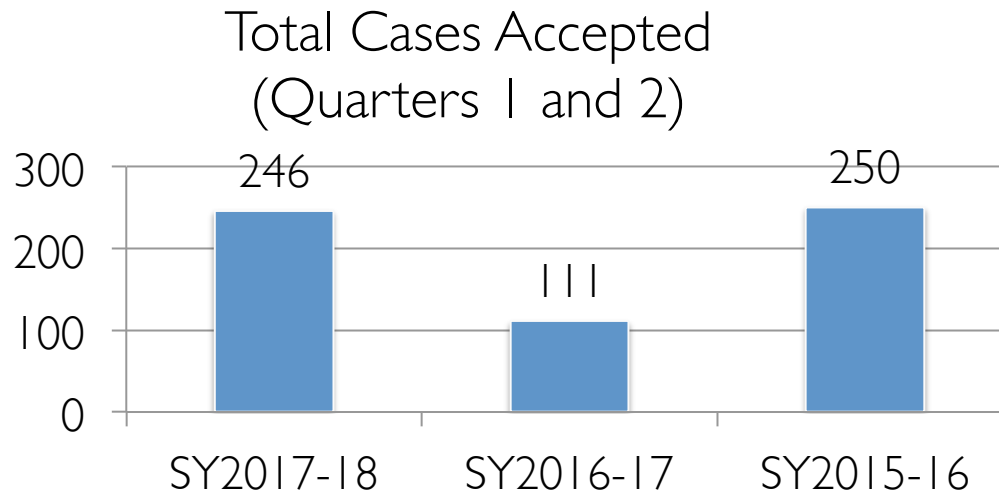


*year-to-date

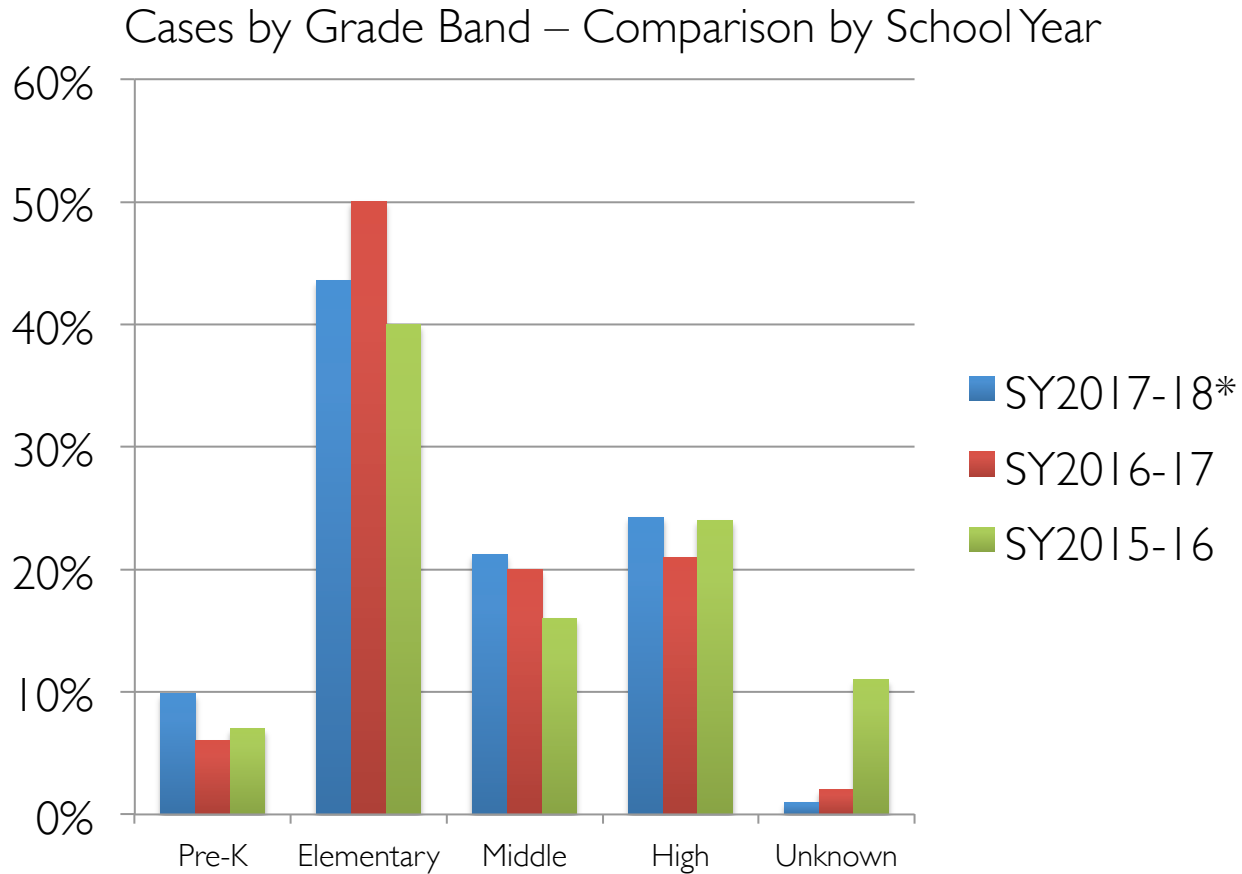
Calls by School Year



of Cases



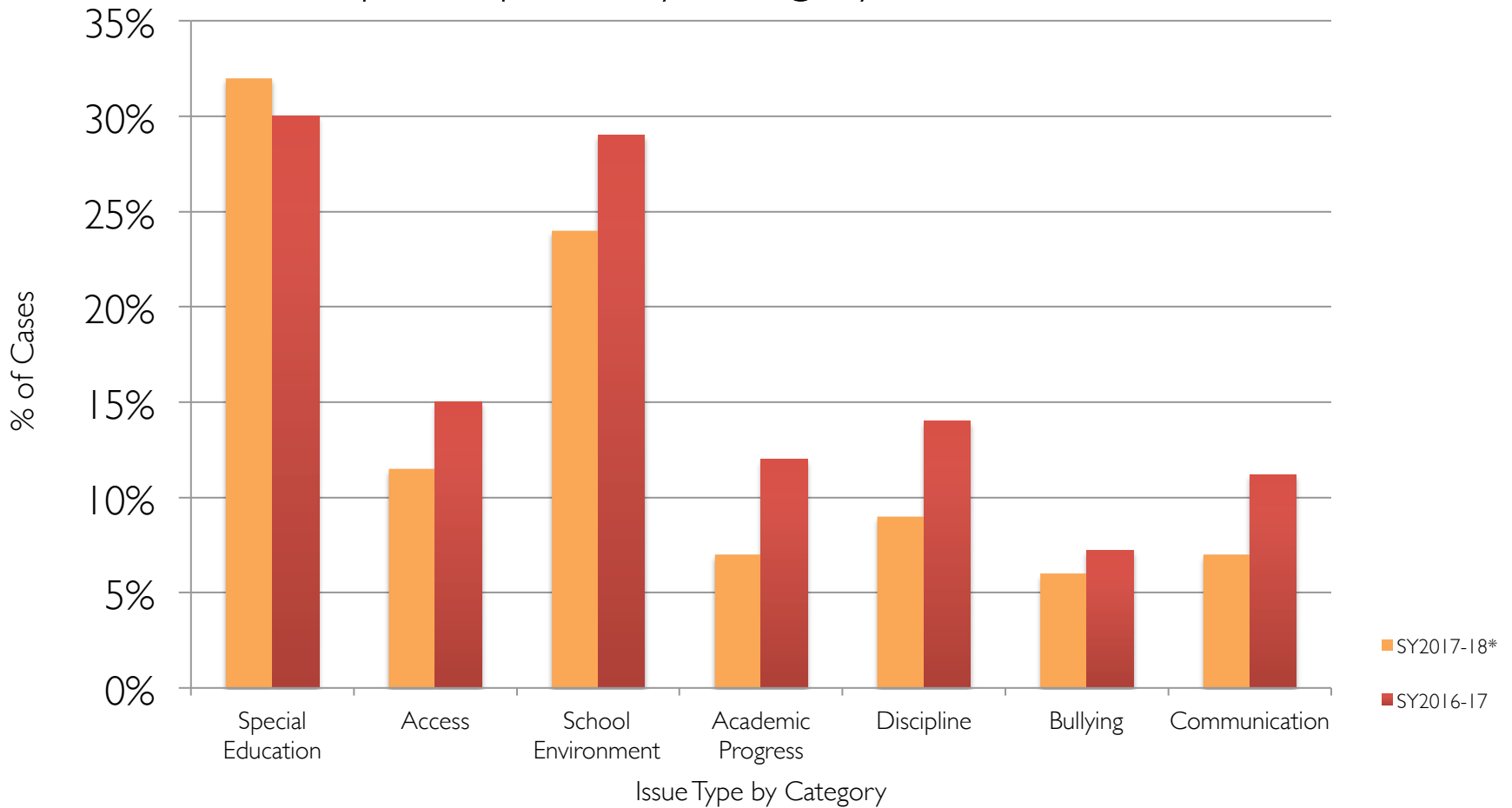
Cases by Grade Band



*year-to-date

Top Complaints

Top Complaints by Category – Quarters 1 and 2



*year-to-date

Strategic Priority Shifts

Starting in SY2016-17, our office made three strategic operational adjustments:

1. Shift most casework to full-time staff.
 2. Accept fewer cases in order to focus on quality of services.
 3. Apply lessons learned from individual casework to more deeply engage in systemic work that will improve learning from all students.
- These shifts have enabled our office to engage in further systemic conversations, ensure that our families have consistent, high quality support from trained staff, and focus our work on the families with the greatest need and fewest opportunities for lasting resolution.
 - By accepting fewer cases and answering our line live, we have been able to be more responsive to the needs of students and families.

Systemic Issues – Accessing Education as an At-Risk Student

Our city's children need our help.

- 49% of students in the District are at-risk of academic failure, and 50% of students have experienced a number of challenges in their home lives – food insecurity, homelessness, abuse and neglect, violence, and poverty. Less than a quarter of these students are proficient in Math and English.
- Though the city recognizes that serious disparities along race, economic, and ward lines remain, the District has been unable to translate this understanding to citywide procedures and policies that would address such disparities, in particular in the education space in a cohesive, coherent fashion.
- As a result, our office has observed that in addition to facing challenges outside the school setting, our city's families encounter additional, school-imposed barriers that may serve to widen the achievement gap. In this presentation, two areas of such barriers will be discussed– 1) when homeless families first enter the system in order to enroll and 2) exclusionary practices such as school discipline measures which serve as a barrier to some of our most vulnerable families.
- The ways in which schools interact with families, as we have observed, often create additional burdens for families by penalizing them for challenges that may result from their status as at-risk. Although we have observed these constructed barriers across multiple lines, in this quarterly report we will focus on a couple of representative examples.

Systemic Issues—Homelessness and At-Risk Families

According to the McKinney–Vento Act, individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence to include: sharing of housing with others; living in motels, hotels, trailer parks; emergency or transitional shelters, etc., are homeless.

Our office has worked with more than one dozen families this school year who would be considered homeless under federal law McKinney-Vento or have self-identified as homeless. Some of these families have reported school-imposed barriers which include:

- Unscheduled home visits or calls to CFSA after families have identified themselves as homeless or “doubled-up” with other families.
 - Calls unnecessary attention to family “housing” status.
 - Makes families feel embarrassed when trying to enroll students in school.
 - Wastes valuable government resources in conducting unwarranted investigations.
- For families who have not identified themselves as homeless, like any other student, homeless students enroll and are asked to verify their DC residency.
 - Since some schools are not aware of the student’s status, they do not ask probing questions about the student’s residency status.
 - As a result, families are asked to present traditional enrollment documentation such as TANF letters, Medicaid letters, SSA annual benefits notification, etc.
 - Such documentation is not required under McKinney-Vento.
 - This puts the burden of proving homeless status on families.

Systemic Issues—Homelessness and At-Risk

Example cases involving homelessness:

- One parent contacted us for help enrolling her daughter in a new school. The family had just moved into a different shelter and could no longer afford to travel to her daughter's previous school. When the parent tried to enroll her daughter in the nearest school, the principal refused to enroll the child because her classrooms were too full and instead suggested that the student enroll at the next closest school to the shelter.
- The school's initial refusal to enroll child is problematic because:
 - This denies a student's right to attend their in-boundary school and
 - It places an additional burden of coordinating transportation to a farther location on the parent, who had changed schools in part because of transportation issues.
- Moreover, our office made several attempts to contact the homeless liaisons at DCPS and OSSE who are tasked with assisting families experiencing homelessness. Unfortunately, none of the staff in either office ever returned our calls or the parent's calls about her situation. Consequently, the time it took to resolve this case was extended one additional week.

OSSE SY 2016-17 Discipline Report

What do we know? OSSE's Discipline Report was released several weeks ago and some important data points emerged from the report:

- 1) While there was an overall decrease in the amount of suspensions from SY15-16 to SY16-17, the rate of disproportionality increased in DC public schools. African American students were 7.7 times more likely to be suspended than white students. This represents an increase over SY15-16 when they were 6.8 times as likely to be suspended. For Latino students, who comprised approximately 20% of the public school population, they were 2.8 times as likely to be suspended as white students (SY15-16, they were 2.4 times as likely to be suspended).
- 2) "At-risk" students comprise about 50% of the total public school student population, and they were 1.5 times as likely to be suspended as non at-risk students. Seventy-two percent of students suspended were "at-risk." Thus, approximately, 5,100 students of the 7,181 students were suspended in SY16-17. And, 76% of the students who received multiple suspensions were "at-risk" students.
- 3) Highest LEA/School Suspension rates: DCPS had 5,477 suspensions, KIPP had 1,862 suspensions, Democracy Prep had 782 suspensions, DC Prep had 696 suspensions, and Friendship had 634 suspensions.

Student Fair Access to School Act of 2017

- 1) Impact of Exclusionary Practices: Students who are suspended are more likely to experience repeated suspensions in the future, have academic challenges, and are at an increased risk of dropping out of school and incarceration.
- 2) Diverse groups support the bill: Organizations such as the DC Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Educators for Excellence who supported the bill and would like to end the disparities in school discipline for students, psychologists from the American Psychological Association, students, teachers, and parents provided testimony in support of the proposed bill.
- 3) UCLA Civil Rights Project: suspensions should only be a measure of last resort; reducing suspensions and lost instruction due to discipline is helped by removing suspensions as a response to minor behaviors, and that training for teachers and school leaders with sustained supports are necessary.

Systemic Issues: Discipline Legislation

4) Expert testimony: Testimony addressed several key points of the discipline legislation debate:

- Autonomy – How do cities balance LEA autonomy with systems-level accountability?
- Implementation – What do schools need to ensure effective implementation of such a policy? Do alternatives to legislation exist to reduce disproportionality?
- Impact – How will legislation affect students who are impacted to varying degrees by such legislation? Does curbing suspensions improve academic outcomes for all students?
- School Climate – Does discipline legislation put students and staff at greater risk of violence? Is there a way to reduce disproportionality while ensuring a safe learning environment?

5) Some of the most compelling recommendations focused on providing additional resources for mental health supports for schools such as for school social workers, mental health counselors, evidenced based Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports and restorative justice programs, a study of the impact of restorative justice programs at schools in changing student behavior over time, trauma informed certification for teachers.

Systemic Issues: Discipline Legislation

6) Significant opposition to the bill:

- Organizations such as the Fordham Institute have argued that school discipline reform impacts school safety.
- LEAs have requested additional support to teachers on classroom management and behavior management practices; provide funding for mental health supports, create an environment that is committed to innovation in schools in lieu of discipline legislation.
- The National Association of Charter Schools Authorizers testified that the best way to reduce exclusionary disciplinary practices is to improve the relationship between adults and students, a blanket moratorium on discipline is risky and unproven.
- PCSB oversight through the use of equity reports increases transparency and accountability of school level exclusionary practices.

7) Points of mutual agreement across both sectors include: shared definitions around how to define a suspension, improved data tracking and transparency, and additional resources in evidenced based PBIS and restorative justice programs, mental health supports (additional social workers and mental health counselors), and training in cultural competency and implicit bias.

Outreach Efforts and Looking Forward

- We continue to engage in discussions around systemic reform in discipline and equity with local and national partners. For example we seek continue our equity conversations through participation in conferences, such as the NewSchools Venture Fund 2018 Summit.
- We continue to participate in bilingual fairs and other outreach opportunities, including the Parents Amplifying Voices in Education Ward 8 Back to School Barbecue, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education English Learners' Back to School Fair, and the Deputy Mayor for Education's MySchoolDC EdFEST.
- We have also presented, on two occasions in FY18 to school-based family engagement staff members from DCPS and charter schools in a PAVE sponsored Family and Community Engagement Professional Learning Community. In these presentations, we discussed best practices we have learned and engaged in to help resolve issues for families, best practices that we recommend to schools to help families get the answers they need at the school-level, and ways to engage families in a way that respects their perspective and means of communicating it.
- We participated in the Office of the Student Advocate's Know Your Rights special education panel in Wards 3 and 6. The Office of the Ombudsman will participate in AJE's Special Education Thursdays webinar on February 8th.

SBOE Appendix

Top Complaints by Ward: Q1 & Q2

Ward	Special Education	School Environment (includes Bullying and Truancy)	Academic Progress	Access	Discipline	Communication	Other / Misc	Total
Ward 1	7	2	4	3	1	2	0	19
Ward 2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Ward 3	4	2	2	0	1	0	0	9
Ward 4	3	7	2	2	2	1	1	18
Ward 5	14	11	3	5	4	2	1	40
Ward 6	6	8	0	1	0	0	0	15
Ward 7	14	21	2	7	4	4		52
Ward 8	26	25	2	10	11	5		79
Not Applicable	1	2				3		6
Decline to Identify	1	1				1		3
Outside DC	0	2		2				4
TOTAL	77	81	15	30	23	18	2	246

Discipline compared to enrolled population

LEA	2016-17 LEA Enrollment	2016-17 Discipline Report # of suspensions*	2016-17 Discipline Report Suspension Rate**
KIPP	5,783	1,862	15.78%
DCPS	48,510	5,477	6.27%
Friendship	4,216	634	10.41%
Democracy Prep	656	782	30.4%
DC Prep	1,710	696	14.42%

*Out of school suspension rate; does not include in-school suspensions. Selected OSSE business rules for counting of suspensions: “Counts of in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, removals to an interim alternative educational setting, and disciplinary actions are derived from the discipline data collected by OSSE from the LEAs. Each unique student disciplinary action date and disciplinary action type is counted once...At the state level, each student is counted once. At the LEA and school level students are counted once at each LEA or school where they were verified as enrolled during the 2016-17 school year.”

**Retrieved from the OSSE Report on the State of Discipline: 2016-17 School Year.

Category Definitions

Categories

Broad definitions that signal what is the primary reason that a student is unable to access their education.

Academic Progress

Issues preventing a student from accessing their education related to grades, credits, transcripts, and curriculum that impact learning or perception of learning.

Access

Issues preventing a student from accessing their education unrelated to the curriculum, or due to procedural difficulties or gaps.

Communication

Issues preventing a student from accessing their education due to real or perceived breakdowns in productive communication.

Disability - Special Education

Issues preventing a student from accessing their education due to a student's diagnosed or suspected disability.

Engagement - School Environment

Issues preventing a student from accessing their education due to the safety, behavior, and environment issues, or actions of students or staff against the student that signal a need for intervention or support from the school. This category also includes bullying and corporal punishment:

Bullying: School Environment issues in which a member of the school community is bullying a student. This includes the legal definition, a family member's impressions, and sexual assault.

Category Definitions

Medical

Issues preventing a student from accessing their education due to medical, mental, or physical illness that signal a need for intervention or support from the school.

Discipline - Expulsion/Suspension

Issues regarding a student who has been temporarily or permanently placed out of school due to a behavior or disciplinary infraction

Other

Issues preventing a student from accessing their education due to issues unrelated to any of the other issues.

Contributing Factors

Observed barriers that hinder access to learning. Issues may stem from a lack of understanding, improper school implementation, or insufficient school training in supporting students. Contributing factors also provide more specificity. These contributing factors allow our office to provide greater precision in communicating policy issues. This precision can better equip stakeholders to target interventions and policies around common pressure points that are often invisible at the policy level.

Does Ballou receive funding for RP?

Ballou was one of five schools that received initial funding from OSSE for restorative practices; Ballou will continue to receive a portion of the total amount budgeted for 2016-17 (\$350,000) and 2017-18 (450,000)*.

Does Ballou receive funding for RP

Restorative DC provided a total of 1,938.7 hours of intensive technical assistance to eight schools: Ballou Senior High School, Cesar Chavez Parkside Middle School, Columbia Heights Education Campus, Hart Middle School, Kelly Miller Middle School, Luke C. Moore Senior High School, and Neval Thomas Elementary.

Technical assistance included leading or co-leading trainings, mediations, staff circles, parent circles, classrooms circles, responsive circles, or other restorative processes; providing demonstrations, observations, feedback, or emergency troubleshooting; offering consulting, apprenticeship, or mentorship; drafting, reviewing, or providing input to plans, policies, reference materials, or other documents; and providing in-person or remote coaching. The actual nature of this technical assistance is the result of both collaborative planning and adaptation, always undertaken in close partnership with each school and responsive to each school's particular context. As part of their technical assistance package, beneficiaries also received reference materials free of charge, which may have included:

- *The Little Book of Circle Processes* by Kay Pranis;
- Whole School Implementation Guide and Planning Tool;
- Peacemaking Circles Overview hand-out;
- Responding to Objections and Resistance hand-out; and
- Sample circle outlines and restorative disciplinary policies.

Does Ballou receive funding for RP?

During the 2015-16 school year, OSSE launched Restorative DC to provide customized, on-site support to specific schools in implementing restorative practices. During the 2016-17 school year, Restorative DC grew from five to eight schools. For the 2017-18 school year, Restorative DC grew to twelve schools.

Restorative Justice Schools in SY16-17 and SY17-18

<i>SY 2016-2017</i>	<i>SY 2017-2018</i>
Ballou HS	Ballou HS
Luke C. Moore	Luke C. Moore
Columbia Heights Education Campus	Columbia Heights Education Campus
Hart MS	Hart MS
Cesar Chavez Parkside Middle School	Anacostia HS
Kelly Miller MS	Washington Metropolitan HS
Neval Thomas ES	Kingsman Academy PCS
SEED PCS	Monument Academy PCS
	Mundo Verde PCS
	SEED PCS
	Washington Leadership Academy PCS
	Kelly Miller

Does Ballou receive funding for RP?

Community of Practice Sessions, SY 2016-2017

The Community of Practice is an experiential and peer-sharing space centered on restorative practices. To provide support to more schools and educators, OSSE also hosts a state Restorative Justice Community of Practice as well as monthly trainings focused on the implementation of restorative practices in DC schools that are open to all LEAs and community stakeholders. Participants engage with other educators for peer support and professional development, while experiencing how restorative justice circles can help build community and resolve issues collectively

The SY 2016-2017 Community of Practice sessions were facilitated in circle by Restorative DC members and/or guests and hosted by different schools or agencies every month, which provided a presentation and tour of their restorative practice efforts at the end of each session.

Does Ballou receive funding for RP?

DC Local Funding for Restorative Justice		
SY 2015-2016	SY 2016-2017	SY 2017-2018 (budgeted)
\$35,000.00	\$350,000.00	\$450,000.00

Source: OSSE FY17 Performance Oversight Questions Narrative Responses