



September 18, 2018

The Honorable Muriel Bowser  
Mayor of the District of Columbia  
John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser,

On Wednesday, September 5, 2018, the DC State Board of Education held its monthly working session where Interim Deputy Mayor for Education Ahnna Smith briefed the State Board about the ongoing search for the next District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) chancellor. Deputy Mayor Smith asked the members for their insight into what was most important for you to consider as you make your selection of the next chancellor. The discussion resulted in a thoughtful conversation about some of the priorities, concerns, and recommendations of the State Board and their constituents.

The State Board is committed to ensuring that the next chancellor is ready to lead from day one. The next chancellor must be transparent and communicative, demonstrate a strong commitment to ethics, and work towards inclusivity and equity alongside a diverse group of stakeholders in our city, with students at the center of their decision-making. These foundational qualities have been echoed in community forums and meetings across the District and we believe they align with the sentiments of the Our Schools Leadership Committee (OSLC).

Below the State Board has summarized a list of additional recommended qualities that you should consider when selecting the next chancellor.

- **Insightful and proactive** – The State Board recognizes the gains and challenges of the District’s current education landscape. As such, the next chancellor must show a willingness to study and learn from the recent past, course correct policies that have proven to be ineffective, and elevate those policies and practices that have advanced our students. This will require a strong leader with the credibility to revisit and possibly change status quo strategies. The next chancellor must be open to encouraging and empowering our schools to share best practices – looking at the programmatic, structural, and budgetary successes of schools – and identifying the best ways to replicate and transmit information between schools and sectors.
- **Committed to analyzing and sharing data with the public** – The State Board recognizes the large amounts of data available to stakeholders – and the importance of making this data accessible to everyone. As such, candidates should bring value using data to provide useful analysis about what will help students succeed and want to share that analysis with the public for their input and ideas. The next chancellor must also know that it is more than



just raw data that the public needs; they need to understand what educational leaders are seeing, how they are thinking about improvements, and enlist the ideas of families and community members to improve outcomes for students. Lastly, candidates should show a commitment to ensuring that DCPS comply to the greatest extent possible with the District of Columbia Data Policy described in *Mayor's Order 2017-115*. Sharing data in an open, transparent, and accountable manner will help to rebuild trust in the education system.

- **Committed to incorporating public input, especially from families, into shaping the direction of schools** – The next chancellor must show an ability to engage and respond in an efficient, equitable, and effective manner with multiple stakeholders. As the leader of DCPS, the next chancellor must also ensure that both individual schools and the central office are consistently engaging and incorporating families' needs, concerns, and questions into their priorities and operations. The next chancellor should *want* to be shaped by the experiences of families – especially those for whom our current way of operating is not working well. This would take the form of training principals across the city to deeply listen to and incorporate the ideas of families into their planning and approach.
- **Willing to innovate** – The DCPS system as it currently operates is not working for a majority of students, as evidenced by the fact that only about one third of students are demonstrating grade-level proficiency. The next chancellor must be willing to try new ideas, thoughtfully and carefully, to explore what might work better for students and their families. Part of this innovation must consider student and school equity and the competency levels of students through differentiated approaches to learning.
- **Capable and committed to championing DCPS** – The next chancellor should have a commitment to a strong system of neighborhood-anchored schools and experience in inspiring schools, school districts, and their leaders to engage successfully in the District's robust education landscape. This requires a demonstrated ability in forward and out-year planning at the school and system-wide level that recognizes the nuances of the strategic planning process and the individual school-level impacts of system-wide decisions. The candidate should be someone who understands the tension between centralized practices and school-level discretion and is committed to finding a better balance, as well as is experienced in navigating this complicated but essential terrain.
- **Focused on building relationships and rebuilding trust** – The next chancellor must be able to engage and establish relationships with the students, families, teachers, administrators, and residents of our city. Given the circumstances of the former chancellor's departure, the next chancellor must have a proven record of effectively rebuilding trust within communities. They should prioritize the democratization of the city's education system when they work to cultivate relationships and build trust.

The State Board recognizes that the above list is not exhaustive and that there are many other qualities that should be considered when selecting the next chancellor. The State Board is fully



committed to working alongside the Interim Deputy Mayor for Education and the OSLC as they work on synthesizing findings and recommendations prior to your selection.

We look forward to continuing to work with you and your education team as we ensure that every student is valued and learns the skills and knowledge necessary to become informed, competent, and contributing global citizens.

Sincerely,

DC State Board of Education

Karen Williams, Ward 7 Representative & President  
Jack Jacobson, Ward 2 Representative & Vice President  
Ashley MacLeay, At-Large Representative  
Laura Wilson Phelan, Ward 1 Representative  
Ruth Wattenberg, Ward 3 Representative  
Mark Jones, Ward 5 Representative  
Joe Weedon, Ward 6 Representative  
Markus Batchelor, Ward 8 Representative  
Tatiana Robinson, Student Representative  
Marjoury Alicea, Student Representative  
Members of the SBOE Student Advisory Committee

