



October 23, 2018

Kathleen Patterson
District of Columbia Auditor
Office of the District of Columbia Auditor
717 14th St. NW, 9th Floor
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Patterson,

The State Board of Education (SBOE) appreciates the opportunity to review and provide comments on the Office of the District of Columbia Auditor (ODCA) draft research report prepared by the Education Consortium On Research and Education (EdCORE) titled *Personalized Learning Plans in DC: Options for a Pilot Project*.

In May 2018, the State Board unanimously passed the recommendations of its High School Graduation Requirements Task Force. One of the recommendations focused on creating personalized learning plans for every public-school student in the District to be revisited at three critical transition points during elementary, middle, and high school. The recommendation called for personalized learning plans to also include a list of home-based interventions and to be overseen by the respective sector (i.e. DCPS or the DC Public Charter School Board). The Task Force suggested that this recommendation be implemented in both traditional public and public charter schools in school year 2019–20 for students in grades 2–4. The Task Force further recommended that personalized learning plans should be expanded to all grades over the 2020–21, 2021–22, and 2022–23 school years.¹

The EdCORE draft research report draws attention to issues raised by the Task Force. Researchers clearly considered and reviewed the recommendations of the Task Force, as they discussed personalized learning plans and proposed six potential options for how personalized learning plans could be implemented in the District.

Below, SBOE has outlined areas of strength and concern on the draft research report. Thank you in advance for considering SBOE’s comments.

- **Defining personalized learning plans** – SBOE appreciates the draft report’s analysis on the three categories of purpose in which the implementation of learning plans traditionally falls (i.e. tracking student progress towards graduation, supporting college and career exploration, informing personalized learning approaches). Additionally, the draft report’s effort to clarify, better define, and outline the research on student learning plans was helpful in understanding the breadth and depth of work that has been done to date. SBOE believes that these three purposes reflect the discussions of the Task Force; however, would like to reiterate the Task Force envisioned personalized learning plans as

¹ https://sboe.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/sboe/page_content/attachments/Final%20Recommendations%20HS%20Graduation%20Requirements%20Task%20Force.pdf



tools to ensure students are “on track to graduate”. On previous research, the information provided on the percentage of U.S. high schools using learning plans (i.e. 65 percent) and the notes of limited analysis and robust research on the impacts of learning plans were helpful.

- **Intentional and purposeful during implementation** – SBOE recognizes that the implementation of personalized learning plans in the District will take a significant amount of resources—personnel, financial, infrastructure, and time. As such, the draft report’s language around ensuring that first decisions include all relevant stakeholders, are deliberate and inclusive, and articulate the goals and purpose for learning plan use is commended. Highlighting that learning plan developers must be specific about the problems to be solved and tasks to be accomplished in order to design learning plans that are effective is also appreciated. Furthermore, addressing the lengthy implementation timelines of other states (e.g. Vermont) was helpful when considering the amount of work on which the District is about to embark.
- **Recognition of previous and existing work** – The previous and existing District-based initiatives around monitoring student progress highlight the District’s ongoing ability to implement school reform and improvement strategies. SBOE sees value in these initiatives, especially the DCPS High School Student Future Map, and looks forward to understanding how they could be integrated and/or used alongside a personalized learning plan program in the District.
- **Pilot program options** – SBOE appreciates Options 2–6, which follow the suggested timeline of the Task Force and have an implementation start date of fall 2019.
 - Option 2 is largely what the Task Force recommended and would help the District understand the broader needs of a specific student population—likely at a feeder pattern of schools in a single LEA.
 - Options 3 and 4 provide unique approaches to understanding keep aspects of the overall personalized learning plan recommendations of the Task Force. Under Option 3, a focus on a single grade would give the District insight into a larger number of schools and allow the District to focus on the specific aspects and indicators needed for a particular student population and grade level. Option 4 is a two-year pilot that gives the District an opportunity to understand a key piece of the Task Force’s recommendation (the grade-level transitions piece); however, this option might also be limited in scope like Option 2.
 - Options 5 and 6 use existing frameworks and efforts to help understand the backbone of what a District-wide personalized learning plan program could look like. SBOE sees value in leveraging existing infrastructure and knowledge to understand how learning plans could be established. SBOE would also like to reiterate that the Task Force recommendations explicitly state that personalized



learning plans would not supplant individualized education programs (IEPs), but serve as an addendum.

- Option 1, although appealing in its deliberate, thoughtful, and cautious nature, seems to prolong the implementation of personalized learning plans in the District. SBOE agrees that there are a set of common steps that must occur, prior to implementation of a pilot program; however, SBOE believes this can be accomplished sooner than Option 1 suggests.

As ODCA finalizes the collection of comments from other agencies on its draft research report titled *Personalized Learning Plans in DC: Options for a Pilot Project*, SBOE welcomes any additional or clarifying questions. SBOE is fully committed to working alongside you and your staff as this draft report is released in the coming weeks.

Sincerely,



Karen Williams

Ward 7 Representative and President

District of Columbia State Board of Education

