



**Testimony of Dr. Jacque Patterson
At-Large Representative and President
D.C. State Board of Education**

Before the Committee of the Whole, Council of the District of Columbia

On Academic Achievement in the District of Columbia

FULL TESTIMONY

November 7, 2025

I. Opening

Good morning, Chairman Mendelson, members of the D.C. Council, and staff. My name is Dr. Jacque Patterson. I am President and At-Large Representative of the D.C. State Board of Education. I am pleased to be here today on behalf of the State Board to provide testimony on academic achievement in the District of Columbia.

II. State Board Advocacy to Advance Academic Achievement

As the only elected body with exclusive focus on public education, the State Board prides itself on advocacy driven by community voice. At our public meetings and throughout our local communities, we hear from students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders about ways to continuously improve academic achievement in the District of Columbia. We are heartened to see the improvement in CAPE scores, but we also strongly believe that more can be done.

Over the past year, we have structured our work and advocacy through the following avenues that we believe will collectively create the necessary conditions for all of D.C.'s students to exhibit high academic achievement:

- **College, Career, and Life Readiness**
 - In October 2025, the State Board launched the [High School Graduation Requirements Task Force](#).¹ The task force is made up of a diverse set of voices from across D.C.'s education and workforce landscape, including teachers, parents, students, policymakers, and economic development leaders. The task force will meet monthly from October 2025 through February 2026. Their efforts will culminate in a set of recommendations for transmittal to the Office of the State Superintendent of Education

¹ See <https://sboe.dc.gov/graduationrequirements-taskforce-2025> for additional information about the High School Graduation Requirements Task Force. A similar task force was formed the last time the high school graduation requirements were updated in 2017.





(OSSE).² OSSE leadership and staff will then consider the task force's recommendations before submitting a final proposal of modified high school graduation requirements to the State Board of Education for a formal vote of approval. Ultimately, the work of the task force will contribute to our collaborative goal of creating graduation requirements that hold all students to high standards of academic achievement.

- In October 2024, the State Board appointed Ward 6 Representative Brandon Best, a former math teacher, to the DC Math Task Force led by OSSE. We were proud to contribute to another collaborative cross-sector task force. In October 2025, the DC Math Task Force released its [*Recommendations for Evidence-Based Math Instruction in the District of Columbia*](#).³ The task force identified high-impact strategies in seven key areas, including high-quality instructional materials, professional learning, and consideration for integrated math. We encourage the Council to support these recommendations, as legislation may be required for successful implementation. We will also continue to advocate for full funding of the [*Recommendations for Structured Literacy Instruction in the District of Columbia*](#),⁴ which were first released in September 2023 by the Early Literacy Education Task Force. States like Mississippi have shown that bold policy decisions and investments in math and literacy can lead to improved achievement and overall outcomes, and it is our shared responsibility to continue doing the same for our students.
- **Student Experience and Engagement**
 - The State Board has been recognized by the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) for our commitment to student engagement. Our staff and student representatives led a session on this topic at the NASBE annual conference in October 2025 for our peers from other State Boards across the country. Additionally, former student representative Anna Mayer and Executive Director Bernice Butler co-authored an [*opinion piece*](#)⁵ about elevating student voice in policymaking for the September issue of the *NASBE Standard* publication on “Civic-Ready Students.” We will continue working with our Student Advisory Committee, led by our four appointed student representatives, to elevate students’ voices on key issues that directly impact academic achievement such as chronic absenteeism and truancy.

² See additional information about the work to reimagine high school graduation requirements on OSSE’s website: <https://osse.dc.gov/node/1696866>.

³https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page_content/attachments/DC%20Math%20Task%20Force%20Report%20%281%29.pdf.

⁴https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page_content/attachments/Official%20Early%20Literacy%20Task%20Force%20Report.pdf.

⁵<https://www.nasbe.org/from-symbolic-to-substantive-how-dc-elevated-students-as-partners-in-policymaking/>.





- In addition to the monthly Student Advisory Committee meetings and the public testimony we receive from students, the State Board is also leveraging forums such as student listening sessions to gather feedback from students about the conditions that impact their physical and psychological safety before, during, and after the school day. We will continue amplifying the ongoing work and expertise of the Office of the Student Advocate,⁶ which is housed within our agency, and will share the feedback we receive and any actionable recommendations with the Council and our partners in the education cluster.
- **Educator Excellence**
 - Retaining teachers is a critical factor in ensuring students’ academic achievement. In 2024, members of the Student Advisory Committee were asked by former Ward 4 Representative Dr. Frazier O’Leary, who was chair of the Educator Excellence Committee at that time, to raise their hands if at least one of their teachers had left during the school year. Nearly all of the students raised their hands. In December 2024, the State Board passed [SR24-7, Calling for a Comprehensive Induction and Mentoring Program for New Teachers in the District of Columbia.](#)⁷ We want to highlight again the importance of structured supports for first-year teachers. Implementing supports such as standardized induction frameworks would help ensure teachers have what they need to stay in the profession and support DC’s students for multiple years.

III. **Closing and Thank You**

The State Board is grateful to the Chairman and the Committee of the Whole for holding a hearing on this important education topic. We are committed to working with you and our partners in the education cluster to ensure continued growth and academic achievement for all of our students. Thank you for this time, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

⁶ Including their October 27 virtual Bullying Awareness and Prevention webinar and in-person, ward-level Student Safety Conversations.

⁷ [SR24-7, Calling for a Comprehensive Induction and Mentoring Program for New Teachers in the District of Columbia.](#)⁷

