



**District of Columbia State Board of Education  
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**DC State Board of Education  
FY 2013 Performance Oversight Hearing  
Council of the District of Columbia  
February 19, 2013 @ 10:00am**

Testimony of Mark Jones, President

Good morning, Chairman Catania and members of the Council of the District of Columbia. My name is Mark Jones and I am the President of the DC State Board of Education. On behalf of the entire State Board, I wish to thank you for the opportunity to discuss the year's accomplishments and to share our vision for the work ahead.

The State Board of Education has played a critical role in the District of Columbia's ongoing education reform efforts since its establishment under the "Public Education Reform Amendment Act of 2007" (PERAA). That law gave the State Board approval authority over a variety of policies that affect all public-school students, including academic standards; high school graduation requirements; home school regulations; accountability metrics, such as the definition of "adequate yearly progress" and format of the state's school report cards; and residency verification rules. The State Board also has broad advisory authority, which it has exercised to, for example, help secure a waiver from some of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act's accountability mandates. The State Board has made great strides in these and other areas, and we look forward to continuing our fruitful joint efforts with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE).

The past year was a period of tremendous change and growth. The State Board filled the long-vacant Executive Director's position in October 2012, added policy support staff with the hiring of a Policy Analyst and by creating a graduate Fellows program, transitioned the office to autonomous status, created committees, and put in place an ambitious agenda tied to revised mission and vision statements. Notable milestones include December's vote to adopt the Next Generation Science Standards, which have been approved by Maryland, California, and six other states. In addition, the State Board, with the significant involvement of community members, recently concluded its search for an Ombudsman for Public Education. We look forward to introducing the Ombudsman to the Committee and public in the coming weeks.

### **FY13 Performance**

As a component of OSSE until April 1, 2013, the State Board did not have a distinct FY13 performance plan. However, we developed a set of strategic priorities that reflected our core values and aligned with our revised vision and mission statements. We also worked with the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) to build the State Board's effectiveness.

Specifically, in FY13, the State Board sought to accomplish four (4) major goals:

- **Goal 1: Build an effective State Board of Education**



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- **Goal 2: Operate as an office of policy, research, and analysis.**
  - **Goal 3: Operate as a convener of education stakeholders and the public.**
  - **Goal 4: Operate as a public advocate.**

**Goal 1: Build an effective State Board of Education**

In the middle of FY13, the State Board gained budget and personnel autonomy. Since achieving this status, we have revised our by-laws and ensured that there was a continuation of support services, such as human resources, contracting and procurement, and information technology. At the same time, in collaboration with OSSE, we are putting the final touches on a 15-month strategic plan that will better position the State Board to review and adopt sensible policies that will help our schools improve student performance. To further strengthen the State Board’s performance, we participate in professional development sessions and serve on national study groups and committees through membership in the National Association of State Boards of Education, where Mary Lord is the President-Elect. In addition, the State Board will be adding non-voting Educator Representatives to the State Board and will be continuing its committee structure so that the State Board is able to accomplish its policy goals.

**Goal 2: Operate as an office of policy, research, and analysis.**

The State Board is responsible for advising on state-level education issues as well as for approving many state-level policies. In the last year, we have increased our capacity to do this by not only hiring a capable policy analyst, but also through our Policy Fellows program. The State Board also continues to build its policy, research, and analysis capacity through membership in NASBE.

In the last year, the State Board has conducted rigorous, informative research in over a dozen areas, including a review of Common Core State Standards implementation, research on competency-based learning, consideration of the Next Generation Science Standards, a national review of “best practices” for parent and home engagement, and poverty and its effects on education. In the coming weeks, we hope to publish some of this work to our website.

Now that we have some capacity to undertake research and policy analysis, we are now able to review the status and progress being made in the implementation of policies and regulations. For example, we are currently reviewing the District’s accountability framework, comprised of the ESEA Flexibility Waiver, Race to the Top grant, Common Core State Standards, and the PARCC assessment.

As many states struggle to implement these items, we want to keep an eye on these activities so that we can help communicate to students, parents, and the rest of the community what is happening and how it will affect them.

We will continue to review policies and regulations so that we can identify areas in need of improvement and share them with the broader community.



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**Goal 3: Operate as a convener of education stakeholders and the public.**

The State Board's independence means that we have tremendous opportunities to work with education stakeholders on a regular basis. In FY13, the State Board and staff convened stakeholders on many issues, such as the graduation requirements, Next Generation Science Standards and LEA Report Cards.

As an example of the State Board's convening, prior to adopting revised truancy rules, the State Board heard that there were concerns from both DCPS and charter LEAs. In order to ensure that they were heard and were a part of the process, members of the State Board invited these stakeholders to convene so that the rules could be discussed. At the end of the day, changes were made to the rules and the State Board felt comfortable passing them. Since then, stakeholders have reported concerns about the implementation of the rules. Given this, the State Board has already started reconvening principals and other school leaders as well as nonprofits and community stakeholders to sort through their concerns so that the State Board can make a recommendation on how to change the rules.

At the same time, the State Board heard from many stakeholders at its working sessions and public meetings. The State Board has hosted over a dozen meetings about revising the graduation requirements, including separate meetings with DCPS and charter LEAs to ensure that as many of their questions and concerns were addressed before they were finally proposed.

Finally, the State Board is currently developing a comprehensive communications and community engagement strategy, utilizing many of the tools we already use, such as Facebook, Twitter, and our website.

**Goal 4: Operate as a public advocate**

Our final goal is to operate as a public advocate and we are happy to say that we will soon be adding a new tool to our toolbox. By the end of the month, we should be bringing on a new Ombudsman for Public Education. Not only will the Ombudsman be addressing the complaints and concerns of students and parents, but by tracking trends and recurring concerns, they will also be able to highlight areas in need for new policies or rules.

Over the next year, we also hope to strengthen our relationships with other education and youth-related Mayoral agencies. In this way, Board members will be able to share their knowledge and experience with the Mayor's agencies as they establish state and local education policies.

**Critical Areas of Need**

Nevertheless, to meet this vision, the State Board seeks support from the Council in a few critical areas.



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Roles and Responsibilities

The Public Education Reform Amendment Act of 2007 (PERAA) provided the State Board with both advisory and approval roles. However, PERAA also stated that the State Board may only “consider matters for policy approval upon submission of a request for policy action by the State Superintendent of Education within a review period requested by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education.”

While the State Board has independent personnel and budget authority, the State Board’s ability to formulate and recommend policy options to encourage increased academic performance is hampered. The State Board needs affirmative action by the Council to allow the State Board to initiate policy approval, as well as rulemaking authority if required.

Further, the current State Board roles and responsibilities are outdated, especially those that refer to “No Child Left Behind Act.” We want to work with the Committee to revise these roles so that District law can exist independently of Federal law.

Space Constraints

We also wanted to make you aware of our need for additional office space if we were to accommodate both the Ombudsman and Office of the Student Advocate. In addition, the State Board has recognized a need to renovate and modernize the Old Council Chambers at 441 4<sup>th</sup> Street NW and is working with the Office of Cable Television to share the expense of modernizing this vital public amenity.

Conclusion

On behalf of the State Board, I wish to express our gratitude at the opportunity to share our testimony before the Council. We already appreciate of the efforts of the Committee to reach out to us and we hope that we will continue to work together to ensure that every student in the District of Columbia has the opportunity to attain an excellent education.

We are here to answer any questions you may have.



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**Appendix**

PERAA reestablished the Board of Education as the State Board of Education with specific advisory and approval authority. The State Board is responsible for advising the State Superintendent of Education on educational matters, including: state standards; state policies, including those governing special, academic, vocational, charter and other schools; state objectives; and state regulations proposed by the Mayor or the State Superintendent of Education. The State Board also became responsible for approving the following state-level policies:

- State academic standards and ensure that standards meet the following qualifications: specify what children are expected to know and be able to do; contain coherent and rigorous content, encourage the teaching of advanced skills; and are updated on a regular basis;
- High school graduation requirements;
- Standards for high school equivalence credentials;
- State definitions of “adequate yearly progress” and “proficiency” that will be applied consistently to all local education agencies;
- State definition and standards for “highly qualified teachers,” pursuant to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001;
- Standards for accreditation and certification of teacher preparation programs of colleges and universities;
- The state accountability plan for the District of Columbia developed by the Chief State School Officer, pursuant to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 ensuring that: (A) the plan includes a single statewide accountability system that will ensure all local education agencies make adequate yearly progress; and (B) the statewide accountability system included in the plan is based on academic standards, academic assessments, a standardized system of accountability across all local education agencies, and a system of sanctions and rewards that will be used to hold local education agencies accountable for student achievement;
- State policies for parental involvement;
- State policies for supplemental education service providers operating in the District to ensure that providers have a demonstrated record of effectiveness and offer services that promote challenging academic achievement standards and that improve student achievement;
- The rules for residency verification;
- The list of charter school accreditation organizations;
- The categories and format of the annual report card, pursuant to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001;
- The list of private placement accreditation organizations, pursuant to Uniform Per Student Funding Formula for Public Schools and Public Charter Schools and Tax Conformity Clarification Amendment Act of 1998;
- Approve state rules for enforcing school attendance requirements; and
- Approve state standards for home schooling.