

Coalition for DC Public Schools and Communities



www.C4DC.org

Mayor Muriel Bowser
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington DC, 20004

August 11, 2016

Dear Mayor Bowser,

DCPS's new chancellor will deeply affect the lives of thousands of DC citizens and have a profound influence on the survival and robust growth of our municipal DC public school infrastructure. The public education advocacy groups meeting in each ward have developed criteria we believe are most appropriate for the chancellor selection. These requirements are consistent with the aspirations of other school districts around the country and should represent a minimum threshold for any candidate.

It is a difficult job with a strong mandate to improve educational outcomes for all DCPS students and to close DC's persistent achievement gap. We want an experienced and well qualified person with the talent and commitment to work with their government and citizen partners for many years. With DCPS's interim team providing continuity, we believe the Mayor and Council should insist on a thorough search until the right candidate is identified. There is no reason to rush to an announcement in October of 2016 as stated in the Chancellor Search FAQ's.

We have identified the following qualities as most important for our new chancellor:

1. Experience as a professional educator and administrator

- Experience at different leadership levels within a school system, preferably as a superintendent in a comparably-sized urban and racially diverse school system with a majority minority enrollment, robust populations of low income at risk students, English language learners and special education students.
- Demonstrated ability in partnering with the public in long range education planning and then thoughtful implementation.
- Extended experience as a teacher with a strong instructional background
- A Master's degree in school leadership, education or a related field is required. A doctoral degree in education research or a related field is preferred.

2. Tenacity in advocating for current and future DCPS families

- A record of strong support for a system of publicly managed neighborhood, by-right, schools; someone who understands their importance in supporting strong families and building vital communities in every ward of our city.
- A commitment to invest in DCPS public schools rather than closing them given the high number of DCPS schools already closed, especially in wards east of the river where a changing DCPS no longer has adequate space to serve those families in quality schools close to home.

<http://www.c4dcpublicschools.org/> Reach us at c4dcpublicschools@gmail.com

- A long term personal commitment to the DCPS system of schools, and to articulating and carrying out a vision with consistent and research based programming.
- Someone who will advocate for the necessary resources both from the city and the business and philanthropic communities to ensure that all DCPS schools are fully funded to meet the needs of their students and all DCPS students are educated in well-maintained, modernized 21st Century buildings.

3. Commitment to healthy and productive relationships with principals, teachers, communities, parents and students

- A track record of support for principals, teachers and all employees, with the ability to maintain productive relationships with the relevant unions in the school system.
- The ability to engage with the public and a demonstrated commitment to authentic partnerships with communities, administrators, teachers, parents and students to strengthen our schools.
- Someone who sees himself/herself as a public servant with integrity, who will reflect on and evaluate their work on an ongoing basis and who will see transparency as a sign of strength and a path to progress.

4. Management skills encompassing core school business functions

- Our new chancellor should have demonstrated experience in managing an administrative team that focuses on all functional aspects of a large school system, including annual and long term budgeting, personnel management, contracting and procurement, food services, facility maintenance and modernization.

5. Demonstrated support for a well-rounded education for every student:

- This includes knowledge of effective, positive intervention programs instead of harsh punishments that discourage young people from attending school. It means rich exposure to the arts, sciences, sports, language instruction and career and technical education as well as before and after-school programming.
- This will require a commitment to additional accountability measures beyond test scores and graduation rates.

Sincerely,

Ward 1 Education Collaborative
 Ward 2 Education Network
 Ward 3/Wilson Feeder Education Network
 Ward 4 Education Alliance
 Ward Five Council on Education
 Capitol Hill Public Schools Parent Organization
 Senior High Alliance of Parents, Principals and Educators

Ward 7 Education Council
 Ward 8 Education Council
 Education Town Hall
 Teaching for Change
 21st Century School Fund
 DC Fiscal Policy Institute
 Washington Teachers Union

Cc:

Deputy Mayor for Education Jennifer Niles
 DC City Council Chairman Phil Mendelson
 DC Education Chairman David Grosso

Members of the Council Education Committee
 DC Rising Leadership Committee

THE NEW CHANCELLOR MUST THINK ABOUT IMPROVEMENT IN A NEW WAY

Statement of Fritz Mulhauser¹
To the Deputy Mayor's Forum and the Chancellor Search Committee

August 30, 2016

The next chancellor for D.C. Public Schools will take charge of a system of about 50,000 students attending about one hundred schools, where enrollment is growing again, attractive school modernizations are a source of pride, in a city doing reasonably well economically. But the chancellor also faces challenges that these meetings will have enumerated: very low achievement for poor and minority students, a huge achievement gap, and uncertainty over fundamentals such as whether key resources (funds, skilled teachers) are distributed fairly. The schools' policy environment remains complex and changing, including diffuse local education governance, a challenging lawsuit in federal court from the charter schools, and new federal rules changing the terms of accountability.

In a city of experts, there is always top-shelf advice. Most recently, an outside committee from the National Academy of Sciences, commissioned by the D.C. Council to review the state of the schools since the reform legislation of 2007, reported last year on a long agenda of needed improvements under headings of coordination, efficiency and lines of authority; improving teacher quality and learning conditions; and of course student outcomes. The committee stressed again and again in its text that important facts were unavailable even after several years of requests and searching, and in response, the D.C. Council made a major down payment on a better data system with added staff and millions in capital funds for the state agency in the FY 2017 budget.

But the last thing the District needs is a new leader promising another wave of central office reform plans—even if the ideas (again) gain national magazine covers, cascades of foundation dollars and full-throated support of a District mayor ready to banish all questions and bet a political career on a schools' strategy.

As MIT physicist Richard Feynman once said, “For a successful technology, reality must take precedence over public relations, for nature cannot be fooled.” In just that spirit, the new chancellor must be one who can face facts and help others do the same, then set about building conditions to embed improvement in the deep organization.

The reality of steady improvement in urban education is that principals, teachers and community partners have to work at it, together, in each school, with bonds of trust to sustain the effort (and inevitable slow progress), trying better ideas again and again and checking the data over

¹ I have lived in Ward 6 for many years where my son attended DCPS schools and I served on one of the old ANC-like Neighborhood School Boards and on the board of Flaxie Pinkett and Nancy Harrison's D.C. Citizens for Better Public Education. I worked on education for two decades as a staff member for the House Committee on Education & Labor, heading areas of policy research at the start of the U.S. Department of Education and leading education program evaluations as Assistant Director in the Government Accountability Office. I was a civil rights attorney at the D.C. affiliate of the ACLU until 2015 including working on education topics including fairness in discipline and budget transparency.

time. The central system actors need to provide resources and incentives that will support the work. Neither central mandates (nor market forces) are a full answer.

A new chancellor needs above all a mind-set about improvement that begins with reality, accepting the existing variation in teaching and learning and building on that instead of wishing it would disappear if not discussed. Going deeper, for example, than broad aggregate proficiency level reports to examine which schools are improving for whom, in which areas, and why—and how can school and community factors fueling their productivity be developed in others?²

This new view also suggests a different frame for accountability. The point is not to make careers, funding or public applause rest on point-in-time scores, or to lash teachers and principals with broad exhortations to do better. The test-score cheating in half of Atlanta's schools in 2005-09 shows where that leads: if the number matters above all else, people will risk everything and fudge the scores.

Instead, our new chancellor should lead the way with incentives and resources so that all staff feel responsible for figuring out how to do better, for being on a reflective path, able to point unflinchingly to problems of today's teaching and learning but also able to explain what they've tried aiming to change the existing patterns, with what results (real data, not cheery photo ops and press releases), and what is being tried next. D.C. has had its fill of programs that come and go, with little or no cumulative learning either among cynical staff or mystified parents.

Note this is not simple, to stabilize staff and establish organizational arrangements so that school teams can have time and information to support systematic quality improvement, and to enhance supervision so that the new improvement effort expected of all is clearly described, fairly evaluated and suitably rewarded. This is serious work for the new leader of D.C.P.S.

As we leave behind the era of the federal No Child Left Behind statute (proven finally to be so unhelpful that Education Secretary Duncan by the end of his term was giving free passes to states to ignore its requirements), let's hope in the next few years we have a chancellor who seizes the opportunity of a new era and who will be proud to point to D.C. as a place where staff are not dismissing data or accountability, not waiting for the next new program adopted downtown, but are in their daily work studying their practice and using all available resources, "getting better at getting better."³

² Building a base of good information will not be easy. Expert opinion is strongly divided whether the test-based value added measure is valid (and in any case it is available for only a fraction of the teacher workforce); teacher observation in D.C. has changed over the years (in what is noticed, how often, by whom, and with what consequences); and many valuable student outcomes, in school and afterwards, are only now under discussion to be measured. And the explanation of schools' results likely requires knowing about a host of other dimensions such as the "system of essential supports" validated in decades of study of Chicago schools. See Anthony S. Bryk, *et al.*, *Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons From Chicago* (2010). Tracking improvement process measures adds more challenge.

³ The phrase is from the title of a recent book by Bryk and others drawing on the story of quality improvement in many sectors, *Learning to Improve: How America's Schools Can Get Better at Getting Better* (2015). Bryk started the Consortium on Chicago School Research and now heads the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Testimony of Mark Simon at the Hearing on Selection of a New DCPS Chancellor August 30, 2016

The opportunity to hire a new Chancellor is the most important test of this or any Mayor. She and her Deputy Mayor for Education have already done something right – holding these hearings. What you choose to take away from what you hear will be the second test. For example, I commend a thoughtful piece written by Gary Ratner, who is testifying tonight, and will echo some of the points he makes. I know other incredibly knowledgeable and wise people also testifying here tonight and hope you hear them in a way that the public and education advocates have not been heard over the past nine years.

1. ESSA, appropriately, reverses course on several important hallmarks of the ESEA era. The new chancellor must have internalized that need for a change in the policy direction. A steady-as-she-goes, more-of-the-same, drunk the cool-aid type, whether from within the system or from outside, will not do. Ask them what they would do differently. Ask them what opportunities for change lie in the ESSA law. I commend for you an excellent whitepaper from AdvancEd by Mark Elgart outlining an approach to ESSA, “Designing State Accountability Systems for Continuous School Improvement: A Call to Action.”
2. ESSA reverses ESEA’s undue emphasis on standardized test scores, broadening the definition of schooling and teaching quality. Look for someone with a history of understanding the appropriate role for standardized tests, not just the usual rhetoric.
3. School improvement is a science with a body of research. DCPS seems to have missed the research consensus on the descriptors of what good schools look like, substituting instead an extreme emphasis on test-based outcomes. The new chancellor needs to be well versed in the components of what it takes to turn low-performing schools around. Gary Ratner lists five of those components as follows:
 - a. Collaborative and knowledgeable school leadership
 - b. An emphasis on instructional improvement and the craft of teaching
 - c. Excellent, deep curriculum with appropriate training and support
 - d. Parent and community involvement and support
 - e. A welcoming, engaging, and nurturing school learning climate

Look for candidates who have seen it and done it and really understand the importance of the social-emotional and non-academic components of what makes a good school.

The research on “Organizing Schools for Improvement” from The Consortium for Chicago School Research, for example, should be thoroughly familiar to any prospective candidate.

4. DC PS has been a fear-based school system since long before the current reform era. The Rhee era doubled down on that top-down, fear based culture, striking fear into principals, teachers and students. It has not been a good place to work primarily due to a lack of respect for educators. Look for a chancellor who is explicit about his or her commitment to change that. The only way for the astronomical rates of teacher and principal turnover to end is with an approach that respects the informed, professional judgement of educators. If the new chancellor doesn't believe in that, the fear-based culture will continue, as will high turnover rates and the cynicism that comes with a fear-based culture. Ask whether candidates believe in one-year contracts for principals. Ask about the appropriate collaborative role for the teachers' union.
5. DCPS, compared with neighboring Montgomery County, Prince Georges County, or Alexandria or Fairfax counties, has placed a relatively low emphasis on the craft of teaching. Teachers have been thought to be expendable and turnover a useful tool. In other words, we have not made the necessary investment in the knowledge of our teaching staff. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has been eschewed, as has the New Teacher Center at Santa Cruz. Even our local Center for Inspired Teaching has been marginalized. Look for a chancellor who understands the importance of emphasizing the craft of teaching and how this emphasis can inspire the commitment of the teacher workforce.
6. Collaboration with the public is essential to building schools as vibrant communities. Parent and community activists have been spurned, when they should have been welcomed as the most important assets we have to improving our schools. The move to mayoral control eliminated the powerful elected school board and most public hearings. Public engagement now seems mainly for show. Choose someone who believes in public engagement as a strategy, not a public relations ploy. Organizations like DC SHAAPE, the 21st Century Schools Fund, the newly formed Ward-based Education Councils, and Communities 4 DC need to be treated as major allies and collaborators.
7. Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, look for a chancellor who is willing to be straight with the public. Everything isn't PR. DCPS needs to invite honest evaluation of what is working and what isn't. It needs to make a wide range of data available to the public. Choose as a chancellor someone who will invest in ongoing independent research and evaluation of the quality of what we are doing, will utilize and making public parent, student, and teacher/principal satisfaction surveys, and someone who will take a learning, inquiring, and transparent approach to running DC Public Schools.



DCPS Rising Leadership Committee
Office of the Mayor
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

September 23, 2016

Dear Members of the DCPS Rising Leadership Committee:

The Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers (WRAG) is an organization representing a cross-section of regional philanthropy, including family, community, corporate, and independent foundations, as well as corporate giving programs, governmental grantmakers, grantmaking public charities, and individual philanthropists. The most recently available data show that WRAG members collectively invested \$228 million in the region, much of which went to organizations focused on the health, education, and well-being of vulnerable children and adults.

Many of our members have provided individual input to the DCPS Rising Leadership Committee or during one of the Citywide Community Engagement gatherings. Today, we are writing to reinforce key issues related to learning time for students, as well as to partnerships, during your search.

Ensuring high quality out-of-school time, extended day and summer programming, as well as maintaining positive and professional working relationships with partners in government and in the community, will be essential attributes of our next Chancellor. As your partners in the provision of youth development services, we know firsthand how impactful these programs and relationships are. Quality out-of-school time, extended day and summer programs keep our young people safe and engaged in meaningful, productive activities during non-school hours. They promote whole child development and provide opportunities for deep and sustained family engagement. In short, these programs are a critical part of our upstream prevention and social service safety net for thousands of children, youth, and families.

Your description of a successful candidate would, among many areas, be a leader who is student-centered and committed to the academic, social, emotional, and physical development of the whole child, and would continue building respectful relationships with all key stakeholders, including students, parents, families, teachers, school leaders, staff, community members, advocates, foundations, partner organizations, media, and elected officials. We wholeheartedly agree that these should be important characteristics of, and priorities for, the next Chancellor.

Know that, as a sector, the philanthropic community joins with you in recognizing the critical importance of identifying the best leader for our city's children and youth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tamara Copeland". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tamara Lucas Copeland

President

Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers



The Honorable Mayor Muriel Elizabeth Bowser

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest
Washington, District of Columbia 20004

Friday, September 30, 2016

Mayor Muriel Elizabeth Bowser,

As you know, the District of Columbia Public School (DCPS) system is currently seeking a new Chancellor, a position extremely important to the heartbeat of our communities – our schools. Given the growing achieving gap between our students in Wards 7 and 8, it is of the most significant importance to our group of advocates that the next Chancellor have a clear understanding of a) the sense of urgency around focusing on our lowest performing schools b) working diligently to alleviate many of the boundaries preventing Ward 7 and 8 schools from succeed and c) employ Central Office staff who understand the diverse needs of Ward 7 and 8 schools and families and do everything in their power to ensure East of the River schools are progressing each and every day.

After several meetings and conversations, the East of the River Education Advocates have collectively agreed that in order to ensure Ward 7 and 8 schools are successful, we highly recommend naming **Mr. Rahman Branch**, former Principal of Ballou High School and current Director of African-American Affairs for the District of Columbia or **Dr. Mark King**, former Deputy Chief of School Operations and Programs for the District of Columbia Public School system. Both individuals have extensive experience teaching and leading within schools in addition to having the academic background needed to support and supplement their leadership experience.

The East of the River Education Advocates have identified the following priority **qualities, skills and experience** to be most important for the new Chancellor of DCPS. This individual should be able to successfully:

A Visionary
Persistent
Great Communicator

Effective Leader
Ability to Inspire Staff
Ability to Authentically Engage
the Public

School Turnaround Specialist
Special Education Experience
Students with Disabilities

Additionally, the new Chancellor should also prioritize:

- Increase Opportunities for all Students
- Decrease Truancy
- Improve School Culture and Safety
- Increase Parent and Community Engagement
- Increase Student Satisfaction
- Increase Graduation Rates
- Increase quality of special education services and focus on improvement of life outcomes for students with disabilities.



When Ward 7 and Ward 8 school begin to succeed, the entire District of Columbia School system will succeed. In order for DCPS to better serve its students in Wards 7 and 8, the new Chancellor must complete the following:

- Hire a competent, experienced Chancellor
- Hire teachers and school leaders of color that reflect the current student population. These individuals must be experienced and successful at turning around historically failing schools
- Hire teachers with experience working with special education and special needs students
- Incorporate a data-driven, Central Office employee base
- Require a community engagement strategy that is proven to work in cities with a visible socio-economic and racial divide
- Incorporate a social justice curriculum that reflects the true changes occurring within the District of Columbia
- Create a hiring systems that is transparent, inclusive and inviting to members of the school community (i.e. alumni, parents, community leaders, etc.)

Sincerely,

East of the River Education Advocates

Markus Batchelor, Ward 8
India Blocker, Ward 8
Sheila Bunn, Ward 8
Mark Calligan, Ward 8
Sheila Carson-Carr, Ward 7
Thea Dyson, Ward 8
Tina L. Fletcher, Ward 8
Sirraya Gant, Ward 8
Wendy Glenn, Ward 8
Mike Grier, Ward 8
Shakira Hemphill, Ward 8
Antawan Holmes, Ward 7
Iris Jacob, Ward 8
Ab Jordan, Ward 8
Shekita McBroom, Ward 8
Robin McKinney, Ward 8
Patricia Malloy, Ward 7
Jimell Sanders, Ward 7
David Smith, Ward 7
Trayon White, Ward 8
Jimmie Williams, Ward 7

Cc:

Deputy Mayor for Education Jennifer Niles
DC City Council Chairman Phil Mendelson
DC City Council Education Chair David Grosso
DC City Council Education Committee Members
DCPS Rising Leadership Council



Hillcrest Community Civic Association

"Working Together for a Better Community"

www.HillcrestDC.com

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October 13, 2016

To the respective members of the DCPS Chancellor Search Committee, Mayor Bowser, Deputy Mayor for Education Niles, and the Boyden Executive Search Firm:

As many of you know, the Hillcrest community located in Ward 7 is an educational and political hotspot—in recent years it has been home to two Mayors, city council members, countless educational leaders for local and federal entities, founders and principals of both traditional and charter public schools, teachers, employees, advocates, and parents.

More importantly, Ward 7 is home to the second highest number of school-aged children in the District and has some of the lowest performing schools—4 of which were actually closed recently. The Hillcrest community is and will continue to be an educational stakeholder and will fight for educational opportunity, equity, and school and system improvement.

The Education Committee of the Hillcrest Community Civic Association (HCCA) has monitored the DCPS Chancellor search closely and our representatives attended each of the three community meetings. On behalf of Hillcrest, we ask that you read and respond, in writing, to our position with regard to the search for a new DCPS chancellor and our priority issues facing education in Washington, DC. Below are our priorities for consideration in ranking order:

Hire a chancellor who is a visionary leader with demonstrable experience managing system-wide change.

We expect this new leader will have significant classroom and local leadership experience. The chosen candidate must also demonstrate the requisite expertise and skills to continue the reforms underway as well as identify and drive additional systemic change.

Ensure the new chancellor embraces the urgency around providing educational equity, quality, and opportunity for schools and their students East of the River.

In addition to providing high quality education, public schools are neutral, safe community hubs. DCPS must capitalize on this and ensure that all students—but especially vulnerable and disenfranchised populations—have their educational, psycho-social, emotional, and health needs addressed. Our students' needs must be matched by the system's resource allocation and our DCPS leadership must aggressively address the black-white achievement gap that continues to be pervasive in Washington, DC.

Build a leadership team that will re-configure DCPS to better serve DC ward by ward.

The District must build a leadership team—starting with the new Chancellor—that will transform the system to meet the needs of local schools based on Ward need, as identified by real-time data. The leadership must ensure that the system is dynamic and fluid enough to allow schools in neighborhoods to become community centers of education, cultural influence, and cohesion.

Assure that final chancellor candidates possess demonstrable experience in building a strong K-12 education pipeline, with a focus on addressing middle school gaps.

Significant investment has been made in early and elementary education and career and college readiness and access at the high school level. Now, we must drive significant investment in our middle grades to ensure a seamless k-12 pipeline. We want more high-quality options for students who would attend traditional public middle schools. The new chancellor must lead the creation of high quality middle school options that are equitably spread across the District of Columbia, including East of the River.

We look forward to your response and thank you for your dedication to all students in Washington, DC.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Hillcrest Community Civic Association,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeanne Contardo".

Jeanne Contardo, Ph.D.
HCCA Education Committee Chair