



DCPS RISING

CHANCELLOR SEARCH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

A LETTER FROM THE MAYOR

Dear DCPS Stakeholder,

In July, we announced that Kaya Henderson would soon be departing her post after six years. Chancellor Henderson, along with parents, students, and teachers, helped to make DC Public Schools (DCPS) the fastest improving urban school district in the country. With that foundation laid, we have the great opportunity to build a DCPS that delivers a future in which every student in every ward has access to a high-quality education.

To ensure that stakeholders like you have a voice in DCPS' future, I tasked Jennifer Niles, Deputy Mayor for Education, with leading an inclusive search process for our next Chancellor. So far, we have hosted three community forums; established the DCPS Rising Leadership Committee – a group of 17 individuals from all eight wards who are providing me with recommendations on the factors I should consider when making my selection; facilitated four student focus groups; and distributed an online survey. To date, we have heard from over 400 parents, teachers, students and other Washingtonians who want to see DCPS continue to improve.

This report on our search reflects a diversity of perspective and priorities from hundreds of individuals who are deeply invested in the selection of our next Chancellor and in DCPS' success. Stakeholders shared their candid and thoughtful reflections on the DCPS priorities; the desired skills, qualities and experiences of a new Chancellor; and the desired direction for DCPS moving forward. This information will serve as a guidepost as we move through the selection process.

Thank you for your participation and support. As we move forward in the search for our next Chancellor, please continue to follow our progress by visiting dcpsrising.dc.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Muriel Bowser". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Muriel" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Bowser".

Muriel Bowser
Mayor



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the selection of a new Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), DC residents have an important opportunity to shape the future of education reform in the city. The goal of the community engagement process is to inform the selection and ensure a strong start for the new Chancellor who, will build on DCPS's strengths and strategically address critical areas of growth with urgency. The new Chancellor will be in place for the 2017-18 school year.

Process

The process for selecting a new Chancellor includes three main components:

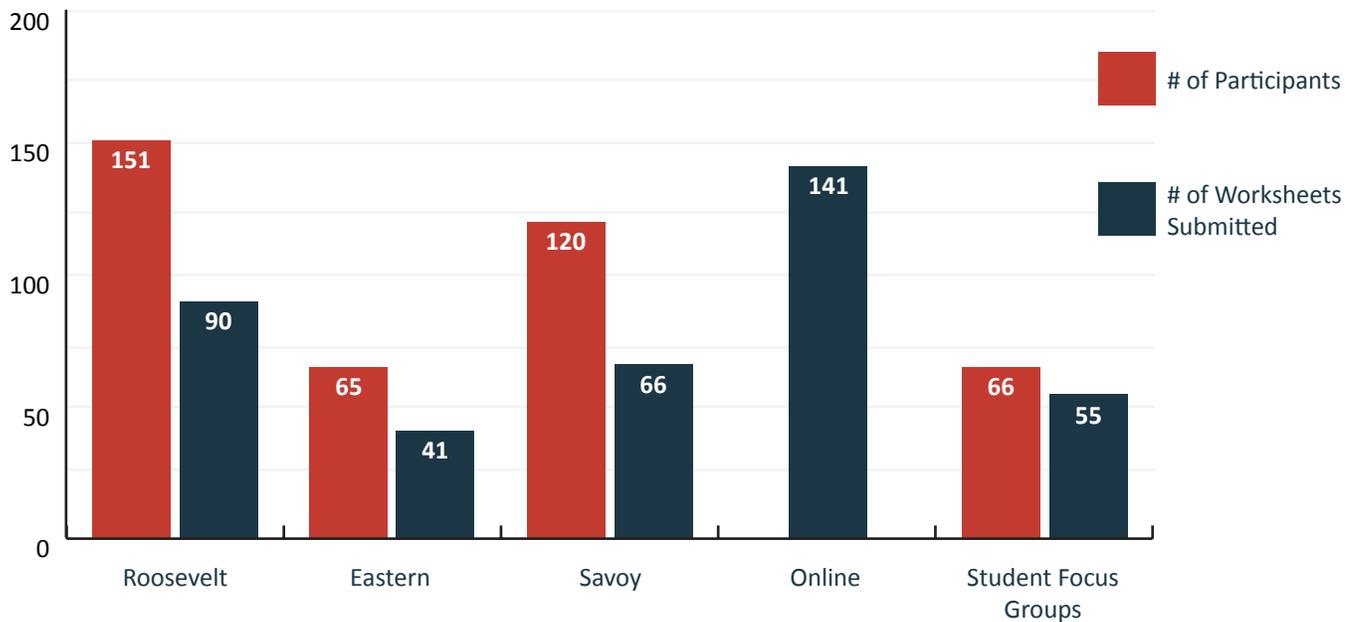
1. Citywide Community Engagement

Deputy Mayor for Education Jennifer Niles and her team (DME) convened three citywide community forums, facilitated stakeholder calls, and conducted online surveys. This community engagement report summarizes the input and feedback received through the forums and online surveys. This report will be shared directly with the Mayor and help

inform the DCPS Rising Leadership Committee's recommendations to Mayor Muriel Bowser about what factors she should consider in the selection of the Chancellor.

There were three citywide community forums that gave community members an opportunity to share and discuss: a) the factors that should be considered when making a selection for Chancellor, b) the priorities on which the new Chancellor should focus, and c) the direction of DCPS. Participants received background information from the DME and her team and participated in facilitated breakout discussions with fellow community members. Additionally, participants were provided with worksheets to fill out regarding their priorities for hiring the new Chancellor. The three forums included:

- Roosevelt High School – August 30, 2016 – 151 participants
- Eastern High School – September 7, 2016 – 65 participants
- Savoy Elementary School – September 14, 2016 – 120 participants



A total of 197 worksheets were submitted, transcribed, and analyzed for key takeaways. As indicated by the chart above, not everyone who attended meetings submitted a worksheet, so it was also important to consider discussions at each breakout table. Notes from 46 table discussions across three meetings were recorded by table facilitators. These notes were analyzed and integrated into this report.

The forum worksheet was made available online to community members who may not have been able to participate in a forum. As of September 26, 2016, a total of 141 additional responses were received.

The DME also held three stakeholder calls to provide progress updates and give community members an opportunity to ask questions. Approximately 50 stakeholders including community members, parents, teachers, ANC commissioners, PTA representatives, and ward-based education groups joined each of these calls.

- July 7, 2016
- August 12, 2016
- September 29, 2016

Finally, the DME held four student focus groups attended by 66 students. These focus groups were held at:

- Wilson High School – September 27, 2016 – 18 participants
- Roosevelt High School – September 27, 2016 – 20 participants
- School Without Walls – September 29, 2016 – 17 participants
- H.D. Woodson High School – October 4, 2016 – 11 participants

2. DCPS Rising Leadership Committee

District of Columbia Mayor Muriel Bowser appointed a panel of 17 individuals to provide her with recommendations about the factors she should consider when making the selection of the next Chancellor. The DCPS Rising Leadership Committee includes representation from each of the District's eight wards. Members have diverse backgrounds and experiences and are highly invested in the success of DCPS.

Committee members were asked to attend at least one of the citywide community forums and to consider community input before making recommendations to the Mayor.



3. Executive Search Firm

Mayor Bowser hired Boyden Global, a top 10 global search firm with extensive experience in local, national, and global executive search/recruitment projects. Their role is to present the Mayor with qualified candidates who reflect the priorities recommended to the Mayor by the DCPS Rising Leadership Committee and community input.

The Mayor will review all information and feedback received from the citywide community engagement efforts, as well as consider the recommendations of the Committee and the search firm, before making a decision and appointing the next Chancellor.

Methodology of Analysis

The key takeaways in this report are the result of combined analysis of worksheets, facilitator notes, and online feedback. All worksheets were transcribed and read for themes and key takeaways. Responses that could be tallied (i.e., responses with preset answers) were counted for frequency to allow participants' most chosen responses to emerge. Facilitator notes and open-answer responses were analyzed in two ways: tallying the frequency of themes being repeated

throughout, as well as having staff read through responses to provide their respective takeaways.

Contributors to the process are referred to as "participants" or "community members" throughout the report. Declarative statements are used throughout the report (e.g., "The Chancellor should focus on..."). Such statements refer to analysis based on participant feedback and should not be considered objective assessments or representative of all community members.

Results

The discussions and worksheets centered around three queries — organized by "activity" — for community members to consider:

Activity 1: DCPS Priorities – In what priority areas would you want a new Chancellor to focus?

Activity 2: Desired Qualities, Skills, and Experience – In order to accelerate DCPS's progress on the priority areas you identified above, what qualities, skills, and experiences are most important for the new Chancellor to have?

Activity 3: DCPS Direction – In addition to focusing on organizational priorities and skills, we want to get a sense from you on whether DCPS is headed in the right direction or if it should make significant changes.

Below are the key takeaways identified by community members who participated in the process. These takeaways are further analyzed in the pages that follow.

Activity 1: DCPS Priorities. The new Chancellor should focus on the following priority areas:

- Reduce the achievement gap.
- Increase opportunities for all students.
- Increase parent and community engagement and communication.
- Prioritize teacher and leadership retention.
- Improve school culture and safety.

Activity 2: Desired Qualities, Skills, and Experience. The new Chancellor should embody the following qualities, skills, and experience:

- Visionary who thinks strategically.
- Resilient leader who can inspire people and has management skills.
- Ability to authentically engage the public and exhibit community relations skills.
- Professional educator with an instructional background and experience in urban education.
- Deep understanding of DC culture and climate.

Activity 3: DCPS Direction. Community members expressed the following regarding the direction in which DCPS is headed:

- DCPS is on a path to success, with more work to be done.
- DCPS successes include: school modernization and facilities improvements, enhancements to innovative programs (e.g., study abroad), improved

early childhood opportunities, and enrollment stabilization or growth in many schools.

- Improvements need to include greater transparency and more effective communication.
- Innovation should be balanced with the patience to implement successful change.
- Concern that there is too much focus on student testing and teacher evaluation.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DCPS Rising Leadership Committee

Gina Adams

Committee Co-Chair, Senior Vice President of Government Affairs – FedEx, Ballou High School Alumnus (Ward 3)

Tara Brown

DCPS Parent (Ward 8)

Rosa Carrillo

DCPS Parent, Language Services Program Director – Multicultural Community Services, DC Language Access Coalition Member (Ward 5)

Elizabeth Davis

President – Washington Teachers Union (Ward 5)

Kevin Dillard

Woodson High School Student and Student Government President (Ward 7)

Michela English

President – Fight for Children (Ward 2)

Ed Fisher

DCPS Parent and DC Promise Neighborhood Initiative Board Member (Ward 7)

Denise Forte

DCPS Parent, Congressional Staffer (Ward 6)

Nicky Goren

DCPS Parent, President and Chief Executive Officer – Meyer Foundation (Ward 3)

Hope Harrod

Burroughs Elementary School Teacher, 2012 DCPS Teacher of the Year (Ward 1)

Maurice Kie

Manager – Life Pieces to Masterpieces, Eastern High School Alumnus (Ward 8)

Jonte Lee

Wilson High School Teacher (Ward 4)

Patricia McGuire

Committee Co-Chair, President – Trinity Washington University

Thomas Penny

General Manager – Courtyard Marriott Convention Center, Raise DC Leadership Council Member, DC Public Education Fund Board Member, DC National Academy Foundation Hospitality Board Member

Victor Reinoso

DCPS Parent, Chief Executive Officer and Founder – Hopscotch Ventures (Ward 4)

Maria Tukeva

DCPS Principal – Columbia Heights Education Campus, 2011 Principal of the Year (Ward 1)

Wayan Vota

DCPS Parent, Senior Mobile Advisor – FHI 360 (Ward 4)

Committee Staff

Jennifer Niles

Deputy Mayor for Education

Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education

DCPS Office of Family and Public Engagement





KEY TAKEAWAYS

The following are key takeaways and analysis from feedback collected from all three community meetings (via worksheet responses and facilitator notes), as well as online form responses. Additionally, illustrative quotes from table notes and participant worksheets (edited for clarity) are included with the key takeaway analysis.

Analysis that breaks down individual responses can be found online:

<http://dcpsrising.dc.gov/page/finding-next-chancellor>.

On what priority areas would you want a new Chancellor to focus?

The new Chancellor should focus on the following priority areas:

- Reduce the achievement gap.
- Increase opportunities for all students.
- Increase parent and community engagement and communication.
- Prioritize teacher and leadership retention.
- Improve school culture and safety.

Reduce the achievement gap.

- Closing the achievement gap will lead to improvements in many other priority areas (e.g., increasing graduation rates, college enrollment, career readiness).
- There needs to be renewed focus on decreasing the percentage of students achieving below basic levels.

- Because the achievement gap mirrors racial and socio-economic disparities in the city, many believe that not all students are receiving the same quality of education. We are not satisfied that some children are performing well; all should have that opportunity regardless of race, background, or geography.
- The new Chancellor should focus on revitalizing the District’s middle schools and strengthening school pipelines.

Increase opportunities for all students.

- Students across the city will have access to opportunities when there is true equity across all schools. There are two main takeaways:
 - *Equity in resources.* There should be an equitable distribution of resources: funds must go where they are needed the most. Equitable and equal are not the same, and the new Chancellor should understand that schools in different parts of the city have different needs and challenges. Low-performing schools should receive greater investment.
 - *Access to high quality curricula and teachers.* A student’s zip code should not determine his/her access to quality teachers and rigorous curricula. The same curricula — that all teachers are prepared to teach — should be taught across all schools.
- DCPS should focus on both college and career curricula, to ensure those who may not be on a college path are not left behind. Students should be taught employable skills that they can use immediately after high school to fill high-paying jobs in DC.
- Increased opportunities should also be extended to English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with individualized education programs (IEPs).
- Advanced students should also have access to curricula appropriate for their learning ability.

Increase student, parent, and community engagement and communication.

- Parents want to be partners and want a voice in the decision-making process around their schools. They want a leader who will engage authentically, listen actively, provide a clear mechanism for feedback, and develop relationships.
- Students would like a Chancellor who is accessible to them and who will listen to their concerns. They would like someone who is present and involved.
- Transparency and open lines of communication is critical to building trust. Forum participants want significant decisions to be openly and honestly communicated with the community.

“The quest for equity gets confused with the quest for equality — everyone needs resources, but they don’t all need the same ones.” – DCPS Teacher, Online Participant

“The most important statistic is the percentage of kids who are below basic.” – Roosevelt HS Community Forum Participant

“[DCPS needs] more programs and resources as it relates to race and equity.” – Ward 7 Resident, DCPS Parent, Online Participant

“Elementary schools are showing great progress, but DCPS is losing families at middle school.” – Ward 6 Resident, DCPS Parent, Online Participant

“The curriculum needs to be re-evaluated to ensure that it is quality and meets the needs of the students in this city.” – Savoy ES Forum Participant

“[DCPS needs to make] curriculum changes, including real-world application courses, such as economics, culinary ability, etc.” – School Without Walls Student



Prioritize teacher and leadership retention.

- Recruiting and retaining a culturally competent and highly effective workforce is crucial. Recruiting and retaining more African-American male teachers and leaders is also important.
- There is a desire to give teachers and principals more autonomy over their schools and classrooms.
- Teachers should not be constricted by evaluation practices or so that they cannot be effective advocates for their students.
- There should be a culture of support around teachers to help boost morale and forge a strong working environment.

Improve school culture and safety.

- Schools should encourage students to relate better with each other and school staff through cross-cultural development.
- Schools should also know how to relate to and support students who may be facing the effects of trauma, dangerous situations, bullying, homelessness, and other significant personal issues.
- Culture and safety can positively or negatively impact student matriculation and retention.

"[The new Chancellor should have] more involvement with the students." – Ward 4 Resident, Roosevelt HS Student

"My biggest suggestion is to trust that real transparency will help in the long run – it does take time and it is messy and tiring, yes. But it will SAVE time and work in the long run to have the buy-in of your stakeholders." – Ward 4 Resident, DCPS Parent, Online Participant

"[DCPS needs] to recruit, retain and develop African American male teacher pipeline." – Roosevelt HS Community Forum Participant

What qualities, skills and experiences are most important for the DCPS Chancellor to have?

The DCPS Chancellor should embody the following qualities, skills, and experience:

- Visionary who thinks strategically.
- Resilient leader who can inspire staff and students and has management skills.
- Ability to authentically engage the public and exhibit community relations skills.
- Professional educator with an instructional background and experience in urban education.
- Deep understanding of DC culture and climate.

The DCPS Chancellor ideally should be a visionary who thinks strategically.

- The successful candidate should know how to create and implement innovative new ideas, and be able to balance innovation with a commitment to giving new ideas a chance to percolate and work before changing course. While most participants welcome bringing new ideas to schools, some voiced concerns with the frequency of changes which can make it hard for teachers and administrators to implement new programs and policies, and monitor whether a new idea is successful.

The DCPS Chancellor ideally should be a resilient leader who can inspire staff and students and who knows how to manage a large school system.

Two types of leadership skills are desired in the new Chancellor:

- Ability to inspire and motivate staff, students, and the community. The successful candidate should be an inspiration to staff and help to reinvigorate a passion for teaching. In addition, the new Chancellor must be an inspiration to students and motivational in encouraging the community to rally around schools.
- Strong management skills, especially when it comes to budgeting and allocating resources in a large school system.

“Commitment to a culture of support, growth, trust and respect.” – Ward 6 Resident, Eastern HS Community Forum Participant

“[The new Chancellor needs to focus on] a better support system.” – Ward 8 Resident, School Without Walls Student

“Leadership that inspires principals, teachers, parents.” – Ward 6 Resident, DCPS Parent, Eastern HS Forum Participant

The DCPS Chancellor ideally should have the ability to authentically engage the public and must have good community relations, communications, and interpersonal skills.

The successful candidate should be:

- A good listener and know how to build relationships not only with families and schools, but also with the community as a whole.
- Honest and transparent, communicating with the community often and openly — not only when a decision needs to be made.
- A leader who operates with integrity.

The DCPS Chancellor ideally should be a professional educator with an instructional background and experience in urban education.

The successful candidate should have:

- Some experience leading a large school system (similar to DC) with demonstrated results.
- Both classroom and school leadership experience.
- A proven track record of turning around a school or a district.

There is a bit of a paradox in what is desired. While many participants expressed their wish for a Chancellor with a proven track record of success, there is also a desire for a Chancellor with new and original ideas. In essence, there is a desire for someone with big, bold, and different ideas, but also a proven track record of turning these ideas into reality.

The DCPS Chancellor ideally should understand DC culture and climate.

- The candidate should have the ability to navigate DC’s political environment without being political.
- Students in particular would also like a Chancellor who has a good understanding of DC schools.

“Follow through on great ideas and best practices before moving on to the next BIG thing.” – Roosevelt HS Community Forum Participant

“[Focus on] money and how it's used for schools and specific resources.” – Ward 3 Resident, Wilson HS Student

“Educational decisions and community leadership decisions should require and seek community input. That input should play a significant role in DCPS decisions.” – Savoy ES Forum Participant

“The Chancellor should be more open to what people want.” – Ward 8 Resident, H.D. Woodson HS Student

“Someone with urban education background (ideally, someone who has success in an urban environment but is also formally trained).” – Savoy ES Forum Participant

Is DCPS headed in the right direction? What is working and what needs to change?

Community members expressed the following regarding the direction in which DCPS is headed:

- DCPS is on a path to success, with more work to be done.
- DCPS successes include: school modernization and facilities improvements, enhancements to innovative programs (e.g., study abroad), improved early childhood opportunities, and enrollment stabilization or growth in many schools.
- Improvements need to include greater transparency and more effective communication.
- Innovation should be balanced with the patience to implement successful change.
- Concern that there is too much focus on student testing and teacher evaluation.

Overall, DCPS is on a path to success.

- Community members have many good things to say about DCPS and express positive sentiments about the direction the school system is headed. Most comments also express adjustments that need to be made.

DCPS successes include school modernization and increases in innovative programs.

- School renovations and modernization programs are positive points in DCPS's path to success.
- Early childhood education, bilingual education, and study abroad are highlights for DCPS. The school system should improve, increase, and sustain innovative educational options like these.

Improvements should include transparency and effective communication.

- Themes of transparency were consistent across all meetings, but many of these responses did not elaborate on what exactly DCPS needs to be more transparent. The few areas mentioned include budget, modernization, teacher evaluation, and communication.

There is tension between trends of innovation versus constant change.

- Innovative programs (e.g., study abroad) receive positive feedback, and there is desire for more programs like these. At the same time, there is a sense that sometimes a "big new idea" is adopted at the expense of giving existing programs a chance to work and be replicated and measured for effectiveness. Schools and teachers may be weary of too much change.

"[The new Chancellor should] have background knowledge on DCPS system and history"
– H.D. Woodson HS Student

"Navigate the political waters of DC." – Roosevelt HS Forum Participant

"Certain schools have been very successful, and rather than moving their principals and teachers to poor performing schools, we need to learn from what is working there." – Ward 6 Resident, DCPS Parent Online Participant

"Something that has been successful is the modernization of the building to fit the setting."
– Ward 4 Resident, Roosevelt HS Student

"Success: ...expanding access to enriching opportunities for all students (e.g., study abroad), building new, beautiful learning facilities for students." – Ward 1 Resident, Roosevelt HS Forum Participant

There is concern that increased focus on testing and teacher evaluation may negatively affect student achievement and teacher retention.

- The abundance of testing and test-focused curricula at schools is potentially limiting to a holistic educational experience that prepares and empowers students to thrive after graduation.
- For some community members, the evaluation system is perceived as unfair and causes teachers to focus more on themselves than on their students.

APPENDICES

For response analysis and individual participant responses from the community engagement effort, go to <http://dcpsrising.dc.gov/page/finding-next-chancellor>.

“DCPS just needs to improve on small things like being more social and having a little better organization skills.” – Wilson HS Student

“Nothing will work without a sustained commitment. Rolling out new initiatives is easy – staying the course, and tweaking along the way is what has to happen.” – Ward 4 Resident, Parent Online Participant

“Too many tests, too much pressure, too much stress on kids.” – School Without Walls Student





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