



Fiscal Year 2015 Performance Oversight Questions

Jack Jacobson, President, Ward 2
Karen Williams, Vice President, Ward 7
Mary Lord, At Large
Laura Wilson Phelan, Ward 1
Ruth Wattenberg, Ward 3
Kamili Anderson, Ward 4
Mark Jones, Ward 5
Joe Weedon, Ward 6
Tierra Jolly, Ward 8

February 5, 2016



Program Operations and Community Engagement

Q1. What were the major accomplishments of the SBOE in FY15 and to date in FY16? Include the following:

- Specific efforts to engage with the community and other jurisdictions;
- Improvements to the process for student discipline;
- Changes made to regulations regarding student attendance, improving content standards, educator quality, and preparing students for post-secondary success;
- Studies, analyses, and research papers conducted by the Board (provide a copy); and
- Reports published by the Board (provide a copy).

Major accomplishments by the SBOE in FY15 include:

- A report by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Waiver committee on recommendations for the waiver application. The SBOE subsequently approved the ESEA Waiver Application drafted by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). A copy of the report is attached.
- Drafted the report “Challenges Associated With Implementation of the District of Columbia’s New Compulsory Attendance Laws and Recommendations for Addressing Them.” A copy of this report is attached.
- Approved the State Diploma for individuals who pass the General Educational Development (GED) exam or complete the National External Diploma Program (NEDP).
- Created the High School Credit Flexibility Task Force that drafted a set of recommendations for allowing District schools flexibility to award credit in a variety of ways away from time-based Carnegie units. Regulations reflecting these recommendations were posted in the *DC Register* on January 22, 2016 and are currently under review. The adopted report of recommendations is attached.
- Oversaw a review of the District’s health education standards and worked with OSSE on a draft of a new set of standards.

Q2. Identify all legislative requirements (both local and federal) that the agency lacks sufficient resources to properly implement.

The SBOE and its two component agencies, the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education and the Office of the Student Advocate, face increased pressure to accomplish the requirements of statute with the resources provided. In particular, the Office of the Ombudsman has focused on informing as many families as possible about the resources offered by that agency. This has led to increased caseload that is overloading the limited staff available. Similarly, the Student Advocate has never received funding adequate to fulfill the requirements of the establishing legislation. As such, the Chief Student Advocate must limit her activities to only situations that require little in terms of resources. The SBOE also faces challenges due to extremely limited resources and the work that must be done this year to comply with new federal legislation in the



Every Student Succeeds Act. The SBOE is pleased to see that the Mayor and Council are focused improving education for all students, but must caution against an expectation of immediate success without supplying sufficient resources for all agencies.

Q3. Identify any statutory or regulatory impediments, or other operational or logistical barriers to your agency's operations.

The SBOE maintains independent budget and procurement authority, but is dependent on other District agencies for operational and logistics support. In practice, SBOE provides only approval of actions by other agencies and cannot initiate action on its own. This leads to significant delays in the procurement of goods and services as well as inaccurate information about the agency's financial picture.

Q4. What interagency or intra-agency efforts have been made to improve SBOE functions in FY15 and FY16 to date? Describe efforts to collaborate with other boards and agencies to engage in District education initiatives and include in your response specifically any partnerships or collaborations with the following:

- Office of the State Superintendent for Education;
- Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education;
- DC Public Schools;
- Public Charter School Board; and
- DC Public Libraries.

The SBOE has established monthly meetings with senior staff and principles at the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, DC Public Schools, and Public Charter School Board. Furthermore, the Chief Student Advocate sits on the DC Public Libraries Board. As noted above, SBOE members and staff serve on a number of important committees and task forces on specific education issues, like truancy.

SBOE has also undertaken a new initiative in FY16 to establish more and better partnerships with the agencies it interacts with, especially the Office of the Chief Financial Officer, Office of Contracting and Procurement, Department of Human Resources, and Department of General Services. These partnerships are vital to the continued success of the agency and SBOE is happy to report that each agency has committed to stronger links.

Q5. Provide an update on the Board's work to update graduation requirements. Also provide an update on SBOE's monitoring of the implementation of the ESEA Flexibility Waiver including how the Board has collaborated with OSSE on these matters.



The SBOE has an agreement in principle to work with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education on a full update to District graduation requirements. As the Council is aware, there are a number of items that the SBOE has completed a review of and is in favor of adjusting. In order to minimize piecemeal updates that could cause confusion for students and schools, the SBOE is committed to a measured approach.

The passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) by Congress has completely altered the ESEA Flexibility Waiver process. The waiver will be replaced by new ESSA requirements next school year. SBOE is committed to working closely with OSSE on the changes required by the new law. In FY15, SBOE and OSSE worked closely on developing the District's flexibility application that was ultimately successful.

Q6. Provide an update on the Board's plan to establish parent involvement standards for LEAs, including how you will work with the various LEAs on this effort.

The SBOE remains committed to increasing parental involvement in the District's schools. In FY16, SBOE hopes to continue its work on parental involvement standards by gathering additional information from parents, students and school leaders. Further, because the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education and the Office of the Student Advocate are housed within the SBOE, we are provided a direct view into the difficulties faced by parents and guardians across the District.

Q7. Please describe any activity the Board has taken to improve adult Education in the District in FY15 and to-date in FY16. Include in your response any efforts to establish a State Diploma for students completing the GED and NEDP.

The SBOE approved a State Diploma for adult learners who pass the GED or complete the NEDP on January 20, 2016. This is the culmination of over a year of intense investigation by SBOE members and staff, as well as staff of OSSE. Further, SBOE members and staff have toured a number of adult education providers and are working with them to determine if additional changes are needed.

Q8. Does the State Board of Education comply with the Language Access Act? If not, why?

The SBOE is not in full compliance. SBOE lacks the funds necessary to be in full compliance with the Act. In previous years, the SBOE had access to the OSSE language line contract; we are now responsible for our own translation and interpretation services.

Q9. Please describe the working relationship with OSSE. Has it improved in FY15 and to-date in FY16 over previous years? Describe any efforts to formalize policy-making processes



between the two agencies. Also describe any collaboration between the two agencies in FY15 and to date in FY16.

The working relationship with OSSE is better than it has been in many years. The SBOE and OSSE are in agreement that policy-making between the agencies should be collaborative and consistent. We have agreed that education standards will begin an automatic review whenever a new federal standard is adopted. SBOE and OSSE will also be reviewing standards on a regular basis. The SBOE and OSSE have closely collaborated this year on reviewing the District's health education standards, and on several other policy issues.

Every item on the SBOE agenda contains some collaboration with OSSE. As the Council is aware, the SBOE cannot currently institute policy on its own. SBOE is open to beginning a conversation with Council and the Mayor about this restriction.

Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education

Q10. Provide the committee with the operational guidelines, mission, vision, goals, and services for the role of Ombudsman.

The **mission** of the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education is to ensure that all public school students in the District of Columbia have equal access to a high-quality education. We aim to remove the barriers that stand in the way of students' progress. We **envision** an educational system where all schools treat all parents, students, and families as valued partners and where all District students graduate from high school prepared for success in adulthood.

Our office's **goals** include:

- Responding to concerns in a timely, caring, and productive manner;
- Acting as an “early warning system” for emerging issues;
- Identifying and sharing the trends we observe;
- Making recommendations for systemic change to prevent recurring problems and improve existing processes;
- Reducing the need for administrative hearings and litigation by facilitating appropriate and timely resolution of education-related conflicts; and
- Improving communication between parents and schools, on both the individual and systemic levels.

The primary **services** we provide are:

- Providing information about school resources and policies to parents and students;
- Conflict resolution services for issues that impact individual students;
- Making strategic recommendations to improve educational outcomes for all students; and



- Collaborating with families and stakeholders to address systemic issues, such as bullying, educational opportunity gaps, and overrepresentation in school discipline.

It is also important to note that, in order to comply with our authorizing statute and best practices, the services we provide do *not* include the following:

- Playing any role in formal judicial or administrative proceedings;
- Making binding decisions or mandating policies;
- Providing legal advice or legal services; or
- Intervening in school personnel decisions.

Our **operational guidelines** are based to a large extent on our authorizing statute. Additionally, we currently follow these more detailed operational guidelines: It is our goal to offer responsive customer service, individualized attention and high quality conflict resolution services. We provide timely responses to all concerns and complaints, generally within 48 hours from the receipt of the complaint, and we treat all customers with respect. We expect to review all complaints brought to our office with keen attention to addressing the problem in a way that serves the best interest of the students. Moreover, we will take direct action and will regularly share our progress toward obtaining a favorable outcome.

Once we accept a complaint, the steps we take typically include:

- Obtaining detailed information about the situation at hand;
- Researching applicable education law, policies, best practices, etc.;
- Interviewing all of the parties involved, which may include the student (with the parent's consent), teachers, school leadership team, parents, other school staff members, and witnesses to the situation in question;
- Reviewing student records;
- Facilitating or mediating conversations between parents, families, and school staff members;
- Considering and recommending student-centered options to solve the problem; and
- Regularly monitoring efforts to address problems until results for the student are achieved.

At the Office of the Ombudsman, we believe that it is important that we do the following when resolving a complaint:

- Listen and understand issues while remaining neutral with respect to the facts. The Ombudsman does not listen to judge or to decide who is right or wrong. The Ombudsman listens to understand the issue from the perspective of the individual. This is a critical step in developing options for resolution.
- Assist in reframing issues, developing options, and helping individuals evaluate options.
- Guide or coach individuals to deal directly with other parties.



- Refer individuals to other appropriate resolution resources if needed. An ombudsman may refer individuals to one or more formal organizational resources that can potentially resolve the issue.
- Assist in surfacing issues to formal resolution channels. When an individual is unable or unwilling to raise concerns directly, the Ombudsman can assist by giving voice to the concern and/or creating an awareness of the issue among appropriate decision-makers in the organization.

Q11. Provide the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education’s performance plan for FY15. Did the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education meet the objectives set forth in the FY15 performance plan? Provide a narrative description of what actions the agency undertook to meet the key performance indicators including an explanation as to why any indicators were not met.

Accountability

Goal #1: It has been our goal to ensure that we providing relevant, accurate, and timely intervention services to the District’s public school families, students, and parents at the highest level of customer services and attentiveness to the needs of our customers.

- We would like to continue to develop FAQs and other toolkits for parents to engage in self-advocacy and empowerment.
 - We did not have the staffing capacity to meet this goal. In our office, we currently have 2FTEs and one Program Associate, which we share with the Office of the Student Advocate. In School Year 2014-15, we received more than 469 cases, doubling the caseload that we had in SY 2013-14. We believe that this may be an appropriate function of the Office of the Student Advocate to develop toolkits for parents to engage in self-advocacy and empowerment. We will continue to partner with the Office of the Student Advocate in the effort to ensure that parents have the resources they need to engage in self-advocacy and empowerment.
- We would like to work closely with the Office of the Student Advocate, once operational, to ensure that we are partnering to provide parent advocacy opportunities and training.

We were happy to see the Office of the Student Advocate join us mid-way through FY15, although that left limited time in the year for us to partner. Still, from day one our offices worked closely to develop parent advocacy opportunities and training.

- We have developed a robust fellowship program in order to ensure that we are able to expand our outreach to more families and to provide assistance in a more expedient manner.



- While we have been able to continue our Ombudsman fellowship program, the funds to pay the fellows is subject to change based on other budget pressures. In order to provide meaningful learning opportunities to graduate level students in education policy and conflict resolution while training them to meet the needs of our families, a consistent funding source is imperative. For some context, we have experienced an increase in our overall caseload over the last two fiscal years (FY15 and FY16). For example, in Q1 of SY2015-16 (August 15, 2015-October 31, 2015), we had a 27% increase in our caseload as compared to Q1 of the prior school year, 2014-15. We also experienced a 13% increase in cases in Q2 (November 1, 2015-January 1, 2016). In response to our increased caseload, we have started to screen and prioritize the calls that come into our office because during busy times of the year, we are unable to meet the needs of all families that contact our office. Because we are committed to offering quality services to our families, we are trying to figure out the saturation point at which we cannot accept any additional cases. We want to ensure that we can fully support our families by attending applicable school meetings, conducting mediations, and performing applicable research, as needed.
- We continue to refine our data points for collection on student, parent, and school demographics to better inform our strategies for outreach, education, and also to better inform our education stakeholders of some of the challenges within the DC educational systems.

We devoted a lot of staff time and effort in FY15 refining our data management process. Over the summer, we transitioned from Google Docs to our new case management system, a QuickBase application. This shift required a lot of effort expended on data clean up, creation of new data management categories, etc. The transition also required the hiring of a consultant, which further impacted our limited funds.

Outreach

Goal#2: Build relationships with education stakeholders and community professionals in order to ensure that there is a more coordinated approach in serving underserved, underrepresented, and vulnerable populations.

- We have expanded our outreach to District Government agencies such as Child & Family Services Agency (CFSA), Department of Behavioral Health (DBH), and Department of Youth and Rehabilitation Services (DYRS), in order to expand to professionals serving youth in juvenile justice and child welfare systems.
 - We continue to collaborate with the DBH and CFSA. In FY16, we met with the Ombudsmen of DBH and CFSA to start the conversation around how we can meaningfully collaborate. This conversation will continue throughout FY16. In addition, we have received a number of referrals from DBH, CFSA and other



District Government agencies. In SY2014-15, 24% of our cases came from District Government agencies. In FY16, in our second quarter (November 1, 2015-January 31, 2016), 34% of our cases have come from District Government agencies.

- We have engaged in an information exchange with community professionals and organizations regarding opportunities for collaboration and best practices for supporting underserved, underrepresented, and vulnerable student populations and their families.
 - For example, we have engaged with community professionals in mediation in order to look for opportunities to ensure that we offer the best services possible to help underserved, underrepresented, and vulnerable student populations.

Parent Empowerment

Goal#3: Improve the capacity of parents, families and guardians to navigate through education processes and to become better informed of options that allow them to become better self-advocates.

- Create brochures and informational materials for parents on areas of special education, student discipline, and truancy.
 - We did create a brochure on homelessness and we will work with the Office of the Student Advocate to see if additional materials can be developed for parents.
- Improve and tailor the Office of the Ombudsman website presence to ensure that it is user-friendly for parents by providing additional resources and links to community resources.
 - We used FY15 funds to translate our intake form into Spanish and to provide a brief description of our services into Spanish on our website.
- Improve access to families of diverse populations by providing materials on the website and brochures in translated languages regarding student rights and responsibilities.
 - We translated a limited number of brochures into Spanish and also translated the voicemail message on our intake line into Spanish. We did not have the resources in FY15 to translate our materials into other languages. This represents an improvement from FY14.
- Partner with the Office of the Student Advocate to present conflict resolution strategies and parent empowerment strategies to improve educational access for all students.
 - The Office of the Student Advocate became operational in May 2015 and since the Ombudsman was on maternity leave during the summer of 2015, both offices started collaborating in FY16.



Improving Educational Outcomes by effecting Systemic Change

Goal 4: The Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education is committed to identifying and recommending strategies to improve educational outcomes for all students. Therefore, the Office of the Ombudsman is committed to building relationships and to work collaboratively with stakeholders to identify systemic barriers that impact educational outcomes for students.

- Participate in DC State Board of Education policy committees to ensure more seamless transition between understanding policy objectives and goals of the State Board and providing meaningful data and recommendations to the State Board to help inform their policy work.
 - We continue to look for opportunities to find mutual points of collaboration with the State Board of Education. We believe our data and recommendations are helpful to the Board's policy agenda.
- Provide quarterly data reports and any identified trends to education stakeholders in order to continue conversations concerning areas that require systemic change.
 - As mentioned earlier, we transitioned to our new case management system in August 2015, which allowed us to generate the types of reports that we have desired to share on a quarterly basis. We have started presenting the State Board of Education with quarterly data reports and identified trends and systemic observations beginning in the last quarter of FY15. Thus, by the time of this hearing, we will have presented two quarterly reports to the DC State Board of Education. The quarterly reports include data such as how many cases we have received in that particular quarter, the top complaints over SY15-16, compared with SY 14-15, a complaint percentage breakdown by ward, trends that we are seeing, and systemic issues that we are working on regarding DC Public and Public Charter Schools.
 - We also identified opportunities for collaboration on some of our top complaint areas such as special education and student discipline in order to assist with raising awareness around these issues.
- Provide quarterly data reports and any identified trends to education stakeholders in order to continue conversation about areas that require systemic change.
 - We have not provided quarterly data reports to education stakeholders yet. We transitioned to our new case management system in early August 2015 and we have successfully issued two quarterly reports to the State Board, and we will share this report with DCPS at our next quarterly meeting.

Q12. Provide the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education's performance plan for FY16. What steps has the agency taken to date in FY16 to meet the objectives set forth in the FY16 performance plan?



Accountability

Goal #1: It has been our goal to ensure that we providing relevant, accurate, and timely intervention services to the District's public school families, students, and parents at the highest level of customer services and attentiveness to the needs of our customers.

- We will work with the Office of the Student Advocate to provide parent advocacy opportunities and training.
 - The Office of the Ombudsman is working with the Office of the Student Advocate to develop parent advocacy opportunities and training. For example, in FY 2016, we worked collaboratively with the Office of the Student Advocate in a training offered in November 2015 entitled "Transforming Emotions to Effective Advocacy: Understanding the Issues Surrounding Special Education Rights in the District of Columbia." This training provided a basic overview of special education rights for students and to also highlight organizations within the city that offer support to families on such issues.
 - We also joined a bullying panel in FY2016, entitled Parents v. Bullies: Understanding the 2012 Youth Bullying Prevention Act in which we provided parents with tips on how to handle bullying issues and there may be additional opportunities in FY2016 to offer that same program to parents in other wards.
- We continue to refine our data points for collection on student, parent and school demographics to better inform our strategies for outreach, education, and also to better inform our education stakeholders of some of the challenges within the DC educational systems.
 - As a start, we will post our first two quarterly reports which were presented to the DC State Board of Education on our website and through our Twitter page.

Outreach

Goal#2: Build relationships with education stakeholders and community professionals in order to ensure that there is a more coordinated approach in serving underserved, underrepresented, and vulnerable populations.

- We have expanded our outreach to District Government agencies such as the Child & Family Services Agency, the Department of Behavioral Health, and the Department of Youth and Rehabilitation Services, in order to expand to professionals serving youth in juvenile justice and child welfare systems.
 - In FY 16, the Ombudsman has been asked to serve on the Advisory Council for the Department of Behavioral Health. The Advisory Council is designed to advise and support the Ombudsman for the Department of Behavioral Health; 2) support system coordination and collaboration to improve access to services; and 3)



increase the quality of behavioral health services provided within the District of Columbia. The Advisory Council will advise the DBH Ombudsman on program design, operational matters, review data on cases handled by the Ombudsman program and suggest system recommendations based upon the data reviewed.

- In FY 16, the Ombudsman also presented before school-based psychologists at the Department of Behavioral Health. We also received a number of referrals from other District Government agencies, such as CFSA, DBH, and DHS, who want to help families and believe that we can provide parents and students with additional support.

Parent Empowerment

Goal#3: Improve the capacity of parents, families and guardians to navigate through education processes and to become better informed of options that allow them to become better self-advocates.

- Create brochures and informational materials for parents on areas of special education, student discipline, and truancy.
 - We did create a brochure on homelessness and we will provide to the Office of the Student Advocate to see if additional materials can be made for parents. We would need adequate funding, however, to translate the brochures and materials into other languages and for printing costs.
- Improve and tailor the Office of the Ombudsman website presence to ensure that it is user-friendly for parents by providing additional resources and links to community resources.
 - Using FY15 funds, we updated the Ombudsman website to include an online intake form translated into Spanish. With additional resources, we would translate our materials into 5 additional languages as provided by the Language Access Act.
- Improve access to families of diverse populations by providing materials on the website and brochures in translated languages regarding student rights and responsibilities.
 - We need adequate funding to make materials available to parents in translated languages regarding student rights and responsibilities, however, we think this continues to be an important goal. We believe that all parents in Washington, DC should have access to our services.

Improving Educational Outcomes by effecting Systemic Change

Goal#4: The Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education is committed to identify and recommend strategies to improve educational outcomes for all students. Therefore, the Office of



the Ombudsman is committed to building relationships and to work collaboratively with stakeholders to identify systemic barriers that impact educational outcomes for students.

- Provide quarterly data reports and any identified trends to education stakeholders in order to continue conversations concerning areas that require systemic change.
 - As mentioned earlier, we transitioned to our new case management system in August 2015, which allowed us to generate the types of reports that we have desired to share on a quarterly basis. We have started presenting the State Board of Education with quarterly data reports and identified trends and systemic observations beginning in SY 15-16 (which aligns with the end of FY15 and the start of FY16). The quarterly reports typically include data such as how many cases we have received in that particular quarter, the top complaints over SY15-16, compared with SY 14-15, a complaint breakdown by ward (by percentage), trends that we are seeing, and systemic issues that we are working on regarding DCPS school and public charter schools.
 - We are also going to share the quarterly reports to other stakeholders in FY16 and will post the reports on our website and through our Twitter account. We will post our Quarter 2 report on our website and through our Twitter page.

Q13. Does the Ombudsman have the resources necessary to execute his or her duties? If not, describe the areas in which resources are lacking.

No. The Ombudsman does not have the full resources needed to execute the duties listed in statute. Our office budget is tied to the overall DC State Board of Education budget and the overall agency is not sufficiently funded to support the addition of the Office of the Ombudsman or the Office of the Student Advocate. This causes year-to-year budget uncertainty that limits the ability of the SBOE, Ombudsman and Student Advocate to properly plan or execute their statutory duties.

As awareness, and utilization, of the Office of the Ombudsman continues to increase, adequate resources are critical. As of today, the Ombudsman has 2 FTEs and one split-time Program Associate, and 2 fellows. This staffing maximizes the funds available, but is not sufficient for the full needs of the office.

Our fellows assist with intakes, case management, and special projects. Due to continuing capacity issues and a 13% increase in cases in Q2 for SY 2015-16 compared to Q2 for SY 2014-15,, we had to accept a fewer amount of cases, refer cases to other offices, and sometimes decline to accept cases. To date, we have currently accepted 250 cases to date (end of Q2) and we expect to continue the current pace of cases. We expect to be near 500 cases by the end of FY16.



The overall budget of the State Board, including the Office of the Ombudsman has declined in the past three fiscal years. This decline in budget when paired with the increased need for our services, is of great concern. In FY15, the Ombudsman had access to additional resources thanks to unspent funds within the State Board, but in FY16, these resources do not exist. Such constraints will continue to limit the number of families we can support.

For example, currently we have only a single telephone set up for intake calls. Each case can require hours on the phone between the caseworker and family, leaving the single phone line unavailable for other intake calls or follow up on other cases, significantly increasing the time needed to resolve a case. The addition of more phone lines in our current office space is a basic need that was unfulfilled in FY15.

Language Access: As noted above, the SBOE does not have adequate funds to meet the Language Access Act requirements that include translation and interpretation services for families with children attending public charter and DCPS schools.

Q14. Identify any statutory or regulatory impediments, or other operational or logistical barriers to your agency's operations.

Our current statute does not fully meet the needs of our office or always reflect best practices for ombudsman. We engaged in substantive research into the best practices of other ombudsman offices within the United States as well as a review of their statutes. After performing such exhaustive research, we intend to propose a number of revisions which include: clarifying the provision of intervention services; amending certain reporting requirements to align with practice; eliminating unnecessary and burdensome language; and clarifying issues that the Ombudsman might investigate.

Q15. Describe Ombudsman's stakeholder engagement and outreach efforts for FY15 and to date in FY16.

The Ombudsman engaged in stakeholder engagement and outreach through a variety of means. To ensure that District families know about the services we provide, we created new outreach brochures in English and Spanish. We have distributed them at recreation centers and libraries throughout the city. We participated in Ed Fest in both 2014 and 2015. We also participated in a number of other community forums and fairs, including the Office for Human Rights' Bullying Prevention Forum, the DC National Pan-Hellenic Council Fair, and the OSSE Secondary Transition Fair. Over FY15 and to date in FY16, we have presented before many of the ward education councils. We introduced our office to Advisory Neighborhood Commissions and continue to give presentations when invited to do so. We also maintain an active social media presence.

We have had in-person meetings with dozens of community organizations and government agencies, including: Latin American Youth Center, DC Action for Children, DC Fiscal Policy Institute, Advocates for Justice and Education, Family Voices of DC, School Talk, Every



Student Every Day Coalition, Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless, Homeless Children's Playtime Project, Critical Exposure, DC Special Education Cooperative, DC Association for Special Education and the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights under Law. Some of the government agencies we have met with include: DCPS Office of Specialized Instruction, DCPS Office of Youth Engagement, Public Charter School Board, OSSE Office of Dispute Resolution, OSSE Re-engagement Center, District Department of Human Services PASS program, District Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services, District Child and Family Services Agency, Metropolitan Police Department School Safety Division, and DC Superior Court Family Division.

In FY16, we have placed a renewed focus on meeting with principals who are new in their roles or whose schools are the subject of multiple complaints to our office. We started meeting with school principals in December 2015 and will continue to meet with as many as possible over the coming months.

Q16. Regarding complaints to the office of the Ombudsman provide the Committee following information for FY15:

- Number of complaints were received and completed; 469 complaints were received through July 31, 2015.
- Number of complaints examined and resolved informally: 415 cases
- Number of complaints examined and resolved formally: 0%
- Complaints dismissed: 24 cases (5%)
- Number of complaints pending: 16 cases were pending as of August 1, 2015
- Number of recommendations made: 29 cases (6%)
- Number of recommendations followed: 21 cases (72% of the recommendations) and,
- A description of the most frequent issues handled by the Ombudsman's office:
 - School discipline (16% of cases)
 - Special education (15%)
 - Student safety/abuse (9%)
 - Enrollment (8%)
 - Bullying (8%)
 - Truancy/attendance (7%)

Q17. The language in question 12 is taken from §38-353 of the D.C. Code, which requires a report from the Ombudsman that includes the information listed in items a through h of question 12. Does this information conform to industry standards for Ombudsmen? Are there other topic areas that make more sense to include in the report? Does this section of the code require thoughtful revision? If so, why?

As discussed in our response to Q14, we will be proposing revisions to our statute. Now that our office has been operational for nearly two years, we are able to draw on our experience to recommend amendments that best reflect the realities of our work. The language cited from



Section 38-353 was drawn from the US Ombudsman Association's Governmental Ombudsman Standards. We find that the language is largely appropriate to provide a snapshot of our work, but we do believe it requires some thoughtful revision to be as useful and relevant as possible.

Q18. Please discuss policy recommendations included in the Ombudsman's annual report. Provide information on how to best implement policy recommendations included in the report. What has been the response to the Ombudsman's annual report from other education agencies?

In our most recent annual report, we provided recommendations regarding discipline, special education, student safety, homeless students, and family engagement. Implementing our recommendations will require action by OSSE, the LEAs, and individual schools. Some of the recommendations also call for action by other District agencies, such as the Metropolitan Police Department. The Council of the District of Columbia and the State Board of Education may also play a role in guiding the implementation of the recommendations. We have met with various education leaders to discuss our recommendations and will continue that dialogue.

Other education agencies have reviewed our report with interest. We have received positive feedback from key education agencies and our report has also promoted conversations in the media regarding student with disabilities and how to best support them.

We believe that the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education provides a critical role in allowing families and students to have a voice in the education space. We have been able to engage in meaningful policy discussions at truancy hearings and participation in policy workgroups. We make recommendations to solve problems and when we can, prevent them from reoccurring. We cannot make binding orders and instead use persuasion as well as our expertise to make critical recommendations. While we have gained some traction with some education stakeholders in the acceptance of our systemic recommendations, we believe that such recommendations will require District agencies and thought leaders to collaborate across the city to tackle some of these difficult issues. We work to engage in substantive policy discussions as much as possible.

Discipline

1) Recommendation: Discipline responses should focus on keeping students in school.

Implementation: Schools and education agencies should explore and put in place evidence-based alternatives to suspension and expulsion. We understand that some schools already have such programs, but there is little coordination citywide and many schools lack the resources to implement such programs. The Council hearing last year on trauma-informed schools included a number of witnesses who spoke of current and recommended programs that provide alternatives to exclusionary discipline. We suggest that Council convene a follow-up roundtable to assess progress and identify how such programs can be expanded. It might also be useful to develop a Taskforce similar to the model of the Truancy Task Force.



There are several simple changes that LEAs can make to their discipline policies in order to keep students in school as much as possible. Charter schools should review their discipline policies and eliminate any zero-tolerance policies, any policies allowing for suspension for uniform violations or tardies, and any policies that allow the use of expulsion except as a last resort after multiple other interventions have been attempted. DCPS should limit schools' use of the "emergency situation" exception that allows students to be put out of school before a discipline conference if the school determines they present a danger; we have found this exception to be used overly broadly.

2) Recommendation: If students have to be removed from school, they should be given support to keep up with their classes.

Implementation: We have found that students often do not receive work packets until many days into their suspension. We recommend that all schools and LEAs revisit their practices for delivering work packets to ensure that students receive them in a way that allows them to keep up with their classes. We have been told that one barrier is that sending work packets through DCPS's central mail processing system delays their arrival for approximately a week.

While DCPS provides Choice Academy as an alternative school for students on long-term suspensions or expulsions, most charter schools do not offer any alternative educational setting for such students. PCSB and OSSE should work with the charter sector to ensure that charter school students on long-term suspension or expulsion may still receive instruction. While this is not a legal requirement, we believe it would reduce future academic failure, behavior problems, and truancy if students were provided more support to keep up with their instruction while out of school.

3) Recommendation: Students' due process rights should be fully protected.

Implementation: Many DCPS parents have told us that they did not receive timely written notice of proposed discipline. We encourage DCPS's Office of Youth Engagement to review their guidance to schools on this point, and we encourage all DCPS schools to review their practices.

We also strongly encourage DCPS to discontinue their practice of asking parents to waive their right to a disciplinary hearing. We have found that there is simply too much potential for parents to feel coerced or not to understand the rights they are giving up.

In response to our recommendation that schools provide parents with a current list of legal services providers when they suspend or expel students, DCPS agreed to provide such a list. We have not yet ascertained whether schools are in fact using it.

Finally, we encourage OSSE to publish state-level discipline regulations that would establish a baseline for all LEAs. We understand OSSE has had a working draft for some years. We urge OSSE to issue those regulations for public comment and implementation.

Special Education

1) Recommendation: Parents should be engaged as equal partners in making decisions about their children's education.



Implementation: Our recommendations in this section focused on implementation of the recent special education reform legislation. We understand that OSSE and the LEAs are in the process of training staff about the legislation's requirements. We encourage OSSE and the Council to track the implementation to make sure schools are receiving sufficient guidance and technical assistance.

- 2) Recommendation: Students in special education should be able to fully access their education.

Implementation: We identified several different policies and practices that we believe delay or prevent students from receiving the special education services that they need. Our recommendations are directed at DCPS, the charter LEAs, and OSSE.

Student Safety

- 1) Recommendation: DCPS and MPD should clarify their policies about investigating allegations of corporal punishment and make those policies easily accessible.

Implementation: Parents often report that it is difficult for them to obtain clear information about what to expect when there are allegations a student has been physically harmed by school staff. The current written policies are outdated and inconsistent. We urge DCPS and MPD to work together to develop revised policies and make them easily accessible to parents.

- 2) Recommendation: Schools should document and investigate all allegations of bullying and implement curricula to prevent bullying and improve school climate.

Implementation: Schools and LEAs should partner with the Citywide Bullying Prevention Program housed in the Office for Human Rights to improve their practices and programs related to bullying prevention. We found that a number of schools failed to document instances of alleged bullying. Some schools are also in need of more resources for positive interventions to prevent bullying.

Homeless Students

Recommendation: Schools should train front desk staff to avoid common mistakes in enrolling homeless families.

Implementation: Each school and LEA should revisit its training for front desk staff to ensure they understand the basic requirements of McKinney-Vento. It might be useful to implement a "secret shopper" program similar to the one used by PCSB in order to assess whether the trainings are effective. We have found the homeless support offices at both OSSE and DCPS to be excellent resources, and so we hope that those offices could be brought in to assist with training.

Engagement

Recommendation: Parents should be able to easily access a wide range of information about DC schools.



Implementation: We recommend that the education agencies work together to build on the success of MySchoolDC to provide additional information to parents about topics including charter schools' unique policies, schools' academic programs and special education offerings. DME, OSSE, PCSB, and the Office of the Student Advocate in particular should be involved in this effort.

Office of the Student Advocate

Q19. Provide the committee with the operational guidelines, mission, vision, goals, and services for the role of Student Advocate.

The Office of the Student Advocate, which is led by the Chief Student Advocate, was established by the Council of the District of Columbia through the Parent and Student Empowerment Act of 2013 to “provide outreach to students, parents, families, and communities regarding public education in the District of Columbia.” As an independent office, housed within the District of Columbia State Board of Education, we work with a variety of organizations and partners across the city to improve the educational outcomes of DC students.

Our mission is to support and empower DC residents to achieve equal access to public education through advocacy, outreach, and information services. In our work, we provide step-by-step assistance for students, parents, families, and community members to **Be Informed, Be Connected**, and **Be Empowered**. We guide and support students, parents, families, and community members in navigating the public school system in DC. It is our goal to positively challenge the notion that public education is not just a public asset and right, but also something that should be community-focused and community-informed.

The services that we provide include:

- Operating a public education hotline which accepts “Requests for Assistance” from students, parents, families, and community members to answer questions and provide information about public education and to refer individuals who contact our office to the appropriate agencies, offices, and organization within the District that can meet their specific needs. Requests for Assistance can also be submitted online via our webpage.
- Operating an online Education and Community Resource Guide (<http://sboe.dc.gov/page/resource>) which gives individuals the ability to see what resources are available throughout the city, and in some instances nationally, to assist them in addressing their specific needs and concerns. It also gives individuals and communities a place to start in navigating the education landscape in DC. This guide has over 350 resources that are broken down into 30 category areas.
- Providing one-on-one coaching to students, parents, and families on a variety of public education issues.
- Partnering with MySchoolDC and other organizations to assist families in the school enrollment process for students who are eligible for enrollment in DC. This includes



providing families with information on the school enrollment, application, admissions process as well as guidance on school options, appropriate fit for students and families, and choice.

- Providing targeted trainings, information sessions, and resource tip sheets on topics that support the education and achievement of all students. Current trainings include: parent organization development and advocacy training (which will be piloted in Ward 7) and the Volunteer Advocate Program (which is in the planning phases). Information sessions included: know your rights special education and advocacy session. Resource Tip Sheets, which are offered online, include: effective communication skills for interacting with your child's school; fostering effective working relationships with your child's school and teacher; managing conflict through effective communication; know your rights special education and advocacy slide presentation; understanding the difference between a 504 plan and an IEP; questions to ask for parent/teacher meetings; and District of Columbia public education governance structure map.
- Participating in community and school based events (such as EdFEST) and offering presentations about our office to share information about the services we provide. This participation also allows us to be available to talk with students and families about questions, concerns, or challenges regarding public education in DC.

The operational guidelines for our office are based to a large extent on our authorizing statute. Additionally, we have been working to add more detailed operational guidelines, which include:

- Responsive customer service: responding to calls and online requests submitted to our office within 48 hours of the inquiry.
- Individualized, high quality services that meets the needs of the student, parent, family, and individual contacting our office.
- Connecting the 'Requests for Assistance' that our office is seeing to additional trainings and resources that work to tackle systemic issues and remove barriers for students and families to ensure that there is equal access to a quality public education.

Our process for 'Requests for Assistance' inquiries typically follow the following format:

- Obtain detailed information regarding the question or concern.
 - Listen, ask targeted questions, and understand the situation.
 - Review relevant student records, documents, or information.
 - Research, consider and recommend all relevant student/family/community-centered resources, information, or organizations/agencies useful in solving the situation or question.
 - Guide or coach the individual on how to utilize the resource to solve the situation.
 - Refer individuals to other appropriate resolution resources.
 - (If needed) Intervene or advocate on behalf of the individual regarding the situation.
- When an individual is unable to address a specific situation after the previously noted



steps, the Office of the Student Advocate can step in and support the individual as an advocate to give voice to the concern or issue and assist the individual in finding resolution for the issue in collaboration with all appropriate decision-makers involved, at the school-level and beyond.

Follow up with individuals to see if the resources, referral, or additional supports provided by the office assisted the individual in addressing the question or concern raised.

Q20. Provide the Student Advocate's performance plan for FY15. Did the Office of the Student Advocate meet the objectives set forth in the FY15 performance plan? Provide a narrative description of what actions the agency undertook to meet the key performance indicators including an explanation as to why any indicators were not met.

As the Office of the Student Advocate was established as of Monday, May 18, 2015, there is no performance plan for FY15 outside of the rollout and implementation strategy for the office.

Q21. Provide the Office of the Student Advocate's performance plan for FY16. What steps has the agency taken to date in FY16 to meet the objectives set forth in the FY16 performance plan?

Increase Office Awareness and Visibility/Outreach

Goal: Continue to build on current community engagement strategies and expand partnerships/collaborations to establish citywide office awareness.

This engagement includes but is not limited to:

- Continuing to engage and partner with a variety of stakeholders across all eight wards, such as State Board of Education, DCPS Community Action Teams, Public Charter School Board, school leaders, Ward Education Councils, Parent organizations, parents, students, community members, and governmental agencies
- Continuing to distribute materials across the District
- Presenting and serving on panels, committees, and action teams
- Communicating the trends that we see in our work through reporting and communications
- Increase communication efforts to non-English speaking communities
- And, continue to community engagement efforts and outreach noted in Q22 response

Collaborate and Expand Service Capacity

Goal: Build relationships with education stakeholders, community-based and civic organizations, and community professionals to establish a more coordinated approach in serving underserved, underrepresented, and vulnerable populations.

- Expand our outreach to District Government agencies and continue the establishment of ongoing partnerships and collaboration.



- Continue to work closely with the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education in partnership to provide joint parent and student trainings on systemic trends highlighted through their work and to be responsive to student and parent advocacy needs highlighted through our individual and collective work. Partner with the Office of the Ombudsman in supporting families in case of conflict resolution as their advocate to offer strategies for parent empowerment and to improve educational access and outcomes for all students.
- Engage in conversation with community professionals and organizations regarding opportunities for collaboration and best practices for supporting underserved, underrepresented, and vulnerable student populations, their families, and look for opportunities to spark valuable engagement avenues for all public education stakeholders in DC.

Parent Empowerment and Advocacy

Goal: Improve the capacity of parents, families, and prospective parents to navigate the education landscape and educational processes so that they become better informed of options that allow them to become better self-advocates.

- Create brochures and informational materials for parents on areas of special education, student discipline, student enrollment/school selection, and effective communication tools; provides additional resources and links to community resources.
- Continue to improve and make appropriate adjustments to ensure that the website presence of the Office of the Student Advocate is user-friendly and interactive for students and families.
- Improve access to families of non-English speaking populations; offer materials online, and in printed form, in translated languages outlining the services of our office.
- Provide resources in the areas of parent and student rights and responsibilities and services for on-going support.

Improve Educational Outcomes by Effecting Systemic Change

Goal: The Office of the Student Advocate is committed to identifying and recommending strategies to improve educational outcomes for all students and increase students' and families' ability to achieve equal access to public education.

- Committed to building relationships and working collaboratively with students, parents, families, government agencies, community-based organizations, and all education stakeholders to identify systemic barriers that impact educational outcomes for students and limit access to quality public education.
- Participate in relevant education policy focused conversations, such as: testifying before DC Council on policies and legislation; membership on task forces and committees (i.e. Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force and Truancy Task Force).
- Provide quarterly data reports and any identified trends to education stakeholders in order to continue conversations about areas that require systemic change and to discuss how



our office is working to impact those challenges.

Q22. Does the Student Advocate have the resources necessary to execute his or her duties? If not, describe the areas in which resources are lacking.

No. The Office of the Student Advocate is not appropriately or adequately funded to meet the intended goals highlighted in neither the legislative establishment of the office nor the statutory mandate of the office. The Office of the Student Advocate is staffed by the Chief Student Advocate, who is the only full-time FTE in the office; supported by a Program Associate, which supports the office on a split-time basis and is shared with the Office of the Ombudsman; and a fellow, who supports the office for 20 hours per week. The Office of the Student Advocate needs additional funding to hire an Associate Student Advocate; the current staffing capacity is not adequate to meet the needs of the students and families of the District of Columbia. The Office of the Student Advocate is also in need of additional funding to meet language access requirements, provide for outreach materials, provide resources and programming, obtain and develop a database to track its functions and for statutory reporting requirements, improve the Office's website presence, and pay for professional development.

Q23. Identify any statutory or regulatory impediments, or other operational or logistical barriers to your agency's operations.

The Office of the Student Advocate is currently focusing on short-term goals and outreach efforts, as well as building the initial trainings and programs of our office while also giving great consideration and attention to the long-term vision and mission of the office. We expect to identify statutory or regulatory impediments, or other operational or logistical barriers over time. With additional funding and staffing, our office would be able to focus on building and managing coalitions and partnerships, shaping the vision of the office, and drafting trainings and programming. An Associate Student Advocate would assist in managing the trainings, managing the volunteer advocate program volunteers, and supporting the vision of my office to help ensure quality assurance. The Program Associate would be able to focus on operations, processes, implementation, reporting, and other areas of support and logistics. In addition, all of us would be responsive to the many families that make requests for assistance. With only 1 FTE and one part time Program Associate, we must split this work amongst 1.5 FTEs, which is challenging. Thus, the lack of capacity and adequate funding has left our office unable to fully implement the statutory mandate of our office. Additionally, but also importantly, we do not currently have the capacity, or funding, for robust reporting – this greatly limits our office's ability to communicate trends that we are seeing in order to effectively advocate for the students and families of the District.

Q24. Describe Student Advocate's stakeholder engagement and outreach efforts for FY15 and to date in FY16.



The Office of the Student Advocate was established in May 2015. Since the establishment of the office we have strategically focused on outreach during this inaugural year of operation. Outreach to the community is paramount and to reach this goal we have conducted over 50 separate outreach meetings with a variety of education stakeholders. Our initial meetings were more fact-finding conversations that discussed the current landscape of public education in the District and the primary challenges that DC students and families face, and highlighted the statutory mission of the office in addressing these issues. These meetings assisted in fleshing out the action plan for the implementation of the rollout of the office and forging some early partnerships. Following the initial round of meetings, the Office did another round of meetings that focused on introducing our office, explaining the services that our office provides, and distributing our materials.

The stakeholders we have met with include:

- District of Columbia Councilmembers
- Parent Teacher Associations
- Ward education councils and civic organizations
- Nonprofit and community-based organizations (who are directly and indirectly focused on education)
- DCPS and charter schools
- Staff from other city agencies such OSSE and CFSA

We primarily focused on engaging organizations and agencies to ensure a focus on vulnerable populations and families that are entering into the public education system, with a particular focus on students living in Wards 5, 7, and 8.

In addition to in-person meetings, we have also developed a brochure and a website that explains the role of our office and how to access our services. We have a social media presence – we maintain a twitter account, which assists us in sharing resources and information. We have developed resources for families, located on the Advocacy & Informational Resource page of our web site, which include:

- Public Education Governance Structure in the District
- Effective communication tools
- Tools for navigating special education and understanding your rights; and,
- Policy materials, such as a presentation on the differences between and IEP and 504 plan

Our office is still currently in the process of publicizing and distributing materials to parents, families, and all relevant education stakeholders.

Other stakeholder outreach and engagement efforts undertaken by our office includes:

- **Special Education Panel Discussions and Workshops:**

This first panel discussion was a “Know Your Rights” special education discussion, which included panelists from the Children’s Law Center, Advocates for Justice and Education, the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education, Family Voices of DC, and a parent advocate.



The first panel discussion occurred in Ward 8 in November 2015 and was co-hosted with the Ward 8 State Board of Education representative. Currently, our office is in planning phase for the next panel discussion, which will be held in Ward 4 – this panel discussion will be in partnership with the organizations listed above as well as the Ward 4 Education Alliance and Ward 4 State Board of Education representative. For the upcoming panel discussions we will be working more closely with OSSE and their special education parent advisory committee. Future panel discussions will also include a panel of parent experts and professionals.

- **Navigating the Enrollment Process:**

Our office is currently partnering with MySchoolDC to attend several of their parent information sessions to offer support to parents and families during the MySchoolDC lottery process.

- **Ward 7 Parent Organization Development & Support Programming:**

Our office is in the final planning stages for a parent organization development and leadership summit, which will be piloted in Ward 7. Our office is working in partnership with Ward 7 SBOE representative, Karen Williams, and the Ward 7 Education Council to create a series of events focused on supporting parent organizations in Ward 7 (for both DCPS and public charter schools). This series is not only focused on equipping the organization with the tools to revive or establish a parent organization but we will also focus on building capacity, providing tools to support parents organizations in thriving and longevity, creating systems of support/communication amongst parents and parent organizations, and fostering/leveraging parent power.

- **Volunteer Advocate Program:**

Our office has developed a framework for a seven-week training program for students, parents, families, or any education stakeholder that can equip them to be education advocates in their own schools and communities. This program is still in the preliminary planning and partnership phases and will not be launched until later in 2016.

Finally, we have also participated in EdFEST, Carlos Rosario’s Education Fair, and other similar community focused events.

Q25. Please provide an update on the Education and Community Resource Guide recently established by the Student Advocate. What function does it serve? How often will it be updated?

The Student and Parent Empowerment Act of 2013 established the Office of the Student Advocate. One of the primary functions outlined in the legislation was the creation and operation of Public Education Resource Centers (PERCs). In the legislation, Title II Sec. 205 notes:

(a) The Office shall operate up to four PERCs throughout the District.



(b) The PERCs shall be staffed by Office personnel and, at the discretion of the Chief, parent or guardian volunteers.

(c) At each PERC, office staff and, when applicable, parent or guardian volunteers, shall advise students, parents, and guardians on the school choice process and provide them with information on application, enrollment, student assignment, and programs, and on programs and resources for English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

Meeting this legislative mandate and statutory requirement is impossible with the current lack of staffing capacity in the Office of the Student Advocate.

In an attempt to fill this void, the Education and Community Resource Guide was developed and launched on the Office of the Student Advocate webpage. This online resource guide is the **first city-wide initiative** of its kind – this guide is a continuously evolving resource that currently has over 350 resource listings, which are organized in 30 category areas which include:

- Academics - Instruction
- Adult Education
- Advocacy Policy
- Attendance - Enrollment
- Bullying
- College & Career Readiness
- Community Advocacy Groups
- Community Engagement
- Mediation - Dispute Resolution
- Early Childhood
- Education News
- Extracurricular Enrichment
- Government - Legislative
- Health - Wellness
- Homelessness
- Language Access
- LGBTQIA
- Literacy
- Mental Health
- Mentoring - Tutoring
- Nutrition
- Other
- Parent - Family Engagement
- Public Schools – Public Charter Schools
- School Choices - Access
- Special Education - Disability
- Student Discipline - Juvenile Justice
- Student Records
- Student Safety - Corporal Punishment - Abuse
- Transportation
- Truancy - Out of School
- Violence - Sexual Assault
- Youth Engagement

The guide provides students, parents, families, and communities across all eight wards with a roadmap to getting started in navigating the public education landscape in DC. This guide was developed to highlight organizations and government agencies in the sphere of public education that provide critical and much needed services to residents across the District of Columbia. This resource guide not only assists our office in fulfilling our mission but also gives anyone who uses it the ability to gain access to a plethora of resources, agencies, and organizations that are focused on, and impact, education and educational attainment.

The entire guide is updated on a quarterly basis but in an effort to ensure that all relevant and useful resources are available to anyone who accesses the guide, we have created a supplemental document, which is updated on a weekly basis, with any new resources that have been brought to our awareness. The supplemental document can be found on the same site as the full guide. We



have also shared this resource guide quite broadly with our partners and requested their feedback and assistance in ensuring that the resources listed continue to stay up to date and relevant. We have also created a mechanism in which individuals can also submit to us any corrections or additions that need to be made to the guide.

Personnel

Q26. List all employees detailed to or from your agency, if any. Provide the reason for the detail, the detailed employee's date of detail, and the detailed employee's projected date of return.

No employees are detailed to or from SBOE.

Q27. What is the job description and duties of the Executive Director? Describe the functions and duties of the Executive Director and how the Executive Director supports the functions of the State Board of Education.

A position description for the Executive Director is attached. The Executive Director provides leadership and direction to the agency and support staff. The position is responsible for performing operational and regulatory responsibilities related to and consistent with the State Board's mission, objectives, by-laws and other applicable Federal and District laws and regulations. The Executive Director provides general assistance to the State Board members in their official roles including coordination of task forces, committees and/or feedback from external stakeholders on issues indicated by the State Board.

Q28. List SBOE's committees and subcommittees and which members serve on each one.

2015 Committees (2016 Committees will likely be considered by the SBOE in March)

Competency-Based Learning Committee: Chair: Laura Wilson Phelan, Members: Mary Lord, Karen Williams, Ruth Wattenberg.

College-and-Career Readiness Committee: Members: Mary Lord, Kamili Anderson, Tierra Jolly, Joe Weedon, Brian Contreras, Betel Asfaha

Closing the Opportunity Gap: Chair: Tierra Jolly, Members: Kamili Anderson, Ruth Wattenberg, Joe Weedon, Brian Contreras, Betel Asfaha (This committee was originally named "Closing the Achievement Gap")

ESEA Waiver: Chair: Ruth Wattenberg, Members, Mary Lord (This committee has completed its work)

Q29. Has the SBOE adhered to all non-discrimination policies in regards to hiring and employment?



The SBOE complies with all federal and District law in non-discrimination policies.

Q30. Have there been any accusations by employees or potential employees that the SBOE has violated hiring and employment non-discrimination policies in FY15 or to date in FY16? If so, what steps were taken to remedy the situation(s)?

No violations were submitted in FY15 or to date in FY16.

General Questions

Q31. Provide a current organization chart for SBOE and the name of the employee responsible for the management of each program. If applicable, provide a narrative explanation of any organizational changes made during FY15 or to date in FY16.

In FY16, two organizational changes were made to the SBOE. The Attorney Advisor position was eliminated at the end of FY15 because the agency no longer had need for the position. A Program Associate position, reporting jointly to the Ombudsman and Chief Student Advocate was added in compliance with Council requirements in the FY16 budget. An organizational chart has been attached.

Q32. Provide the agency's performance plan for FY15. Did SBOE meet the objectives set forth in the FY15 performance plan? Provide a narrative description of what actions the agency undertook to meet the key performance indicators including an explanation as to why any indicators were not met.

The State Board of Education did not have a formal performance plan in FY15. Instead, the SBOE formed committees to signal its intentions. In FY15, the SBOE made progress in each of the areas where a committee was formed. In competency based education, SBOE created a task force of stakeholders that provided recommendations to SBOE and OSSE. These recommendations were subsequently modified into regulatory language that is currently out for public comment. The SBOE intends to take further action on the proposed regulations in the coming months. In college and career readiness, the SBOE has carefully monitored the transition to the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) exam. The 2015 results were abysmal and have served as a call for additional focus on the growth and readiness of our students. SBOE will continue to ensure that provides an honest assessment of students in the District. The opportunity gap in the District is longstanding, but the SBOE continues its works to dismantle it at every opportunity. This year, the SBOE approved a new State Diploma for adult learners who pass the General Education Development exams or complete the National External Diploma Program. The SBOE also played a major role in developing an ultimately successful waiver application to parts of the Early and Secondary Education Act. Further, the passage of the new Every Student Succeeds Act provides a new pathway of action by the SBOE.



Q33. Provide the agency's performance plan for FY16. What steps has the agency taken to date in FY16 to meet the objectives set forth in the FY16 performance plan?

The SBOE is currently working with a consultant to develop a strategic plan for the agency. When that is completed, a copy will be provided to Council.

Q34. Provide the following budget information for SBOE, including the approved budget, revised budget, and expenditures, for FY15 and to date in FY16:

- At the agency level, provide the information broken out by source of funds and by Comptroller Source Group and Comptroller Object.
- At the program level, provide the information broken out by source of funds and by Comptroller Source Group and Comptroller Object.
- At the activity level, provide the information broken out by source of funds and by Comptroller Source Group.

See attachment

Q35. Provide a complete accounting of all intra-district transfers received by or transferred from SBOE during FY15 and to date in FY16. For each, provide a narrative description as to the purpose of the transfer and which programs, activities and services within SBOE the transfer affected.

The SBOE did not receive or transfer any funds via intra-district transfer in FY15 or to date in FY16.

Q36. Provide a complete accounting of all reprogrammings received by or transferred from the SBOE during FY15 and to date in FY16. For each, provide a narrative description as to the purpose and reason of the transfer and which programs, activities, and services within the agency the reprogramming affected. In addition, provide an accounting of all reprogrammings made within the agency that exceeded \$100,000 and provide a narrative description as to the purpose and reason of the transfer and which programs, activities, and services within the agency the reprogramming affected.

The State Board did not receive or transfer any funds outside the agency in FY15 or to date in FY16. In FY15, the SBOE had a single reprogramming that exceeded \$100,000. Detail on that reprogramming is attached. The reprogramming was initialized to utilize personal services funds



that would otherwise have gone unused. These funds were available due to vacancies that existed for parts of FY15.

Q37. Provide a list of all SBOE's fixed costs budget and actual dollars spent for FY15 and to date in FY16. Include the source of funding and the percentage of these costs assigned to each SBOE program. Provide the percentage change between SBOE's fixed costs budget for these years and a narrative explanation for any changes.

The SBOE does have a fixed cost budget.

Q38. Provide the capital budget for SBOE and all programs under its purview during FY15 and so far in FY16, including amount budgeted and actual dollars spent. In addition, provide an update on all capital projects undertaken in FY15 and so far in FY16. Did any of the capital projects undertaken in FY15 or so far in FY16 have an impact on the operating budget of the agency? If so, provide an accounting of such impact.

The SBOE does not have a capital budget.

Q39. Provide a current list of all properties supported by the SBOE budget. Indicate whether the property is owned by the district or leased and which agency program utilizes the space. If the property is leased, provide the terms of the lease. For all properties provide an accounting of annual fixed costs (i.e. rent, security, janitorial services, electric, etc.).

SBOE does not control any properties.

Q40. Do the properties and facilities meet current ADA requirements? If not, describe the situations that do not comply.

The SBOE does not control any properties. The office space utilized by SBOE on the 7th floor is not fully ADA compliant.

Q41. Describe any spending pressures that existed in FY15 and so far in FY16. In your response provide a narrative description of the spending pressure, how the spending pressure was identified, and how the spending pressure was remedied.

SBOE faces significant spending pressures in FY16 due to a large reduction in NPS, a reduction caused in part by a mandatory COLA increase in PS. For small agencies like the SBOE, this PS increase without additional funding causes significant alterations to budget. In FY15, staffing issues that led to untrained staff having temporary responsibility for budgeting challenged SBOE



and OCFO. This challenge led to spending pressures in some areas while other funds remained unspent. This discrepancy has been corrected in FY16.

Q42. Identify potential areas where spending pressures may exist in FY16. Provide a detail narrative of the spending pressure, including any steps that are being taken to minimize the impact on the FY16 budget.

Due to the decrease in NPS, the SBOE, Ombudsman and Chief Student Advocate face spending pressures, particularly in the hiring of fellows to complete the agency's daily work. OCFO and SBOE are working to minimize these pressures with a reprogramming from PS to NPS, but the process has been slow because of staff turnover at both SBOE and OCFO.

Q43. Provide a list of all FY15 full-time equivalent positions for SBOE, broken down by program and activity. In addition, for each position, note whether the position is filled (and if filled, the name of the employee) or whether it is vacant. Finally, indicate the source of funds for each FTE (local, federal, special purpose, etc.).

See attachment.

Q44. How many vacancies were posted for SBOE during FY15? To date in FY16? Which positions? Why was the position vacated? In addition, note how long the position was or has been vacant, what steps have been taken to fill the position, whether or not the position has been filled, and the source of funding for the position.

See attachment.

Q45. How many employee performance evaluations were completed in FY15 and how was performance measured against position descriptions? To date in FY16? What steps are taken to correct poor performance and how long does an employee have to correct their performance?

Due to a number of factors, employee performance evaluations were not completed in FY15. All employees of SBOE have received performance measures via PeopleSoft or alternative guidelines for FY16.

Q46. Provide the committee with the following:

- A list of employees receiving bonuses, special pay, additional compensation, or hiring incentives in FY15 and to date in FY16, and the amount; and
- A list of travel expenses for FY15 and to date in FY16, arranged by employee.



No SBOE employees received bonuses, special pay, additional compensation or hiring incentives. A list of travel expenses for SBOE employees traveling to professional development conferences and activities is attached.

Q47. Provide the following information for all grants awarded to SBOE during FY15 and to date in FY16:

- Grant Number/Title;
- Approved Budget Authority;
- Expenditures (including encumbrances and pre-encumbrances);
- Purpose of the grant;
- Grant deliverables;
- Grant outcomes, including grantee performance;
- Any corrective actions taken or technical assistance provided;
- SBOE program and activity supported by the grant;
- SBOE employee responsible for grant deliverables; and
- Source of funds

The SBOE did not receive any grants in FY16 or to date in FY16.

Q48. Provide the following information for all grants/subgrants awarded by SBOE during FY15 and to date in FY16:

- Grant Number/Title;
- Approved Budget Authority;
- Expenditures (including encumbrances and pre-encumbrances);
- Purpose of the grant;
- Grant deliverables;
- Grant outcomes, including grantee performance;
- Any corrective actions taken or technical assistance provided;



- SBOE employee(s) responsible for overseeing the grant;
- Source of funds.

The State Board did not award any grants in FY15 and is still reviewing the ability to award grants in FY16.

Q49. Provide a complete accounting of all grant lapses in FY15, including a detailed statement on why the lapse occurred and corrective action taken by SBOE. Also indicate if the funds can still be used and/or whether they carried over into FY16.

The SBOE had zero grant lapses in FY15.

Q50. Provide the following information for all contracts awarded by SBOE during FY15 and to date in FY16:

- Contract Number;
- Approved Budget Authority;
- Funding Source;
- Whether it was competitively bid or sole sourced;
- Expenditures (including encumbrances and pre-encumbrances);
- Purpose of the contract;
- Name of the vendor;
- Contract deliverables;
- Contract outcomes;
- Any corrective actions taken or technical assistance provided; and
- SBOE employee(s) responsible for overseeing the contract.

The State Board does not employ any contracts that meet the District threshold of \$100,000. SBOE utilizes requisitions for items such as transcription services. A listing of all requisitions is attached.

Q51. Provide the following information for all contract modifications made by SBOE during FY15 and to date in FY16, broken down by SBOE program and activity:



- Name of the vendor;
- Purpose and reason of the contract modification;
- SBOE employee(s) responsible for overseeing the contract;
- Modification cost, including the budgeted amount and actual spent; and
- Funding source.

See Q50.

Q52. Provide the following information for all purchase card transactions during FY15 and to-date in FY-15:

- Employee that made the transaction;
- Transaction amount; and
- Transaction purpose.

See attached.

Q53. Provide copies of any investigations, reviews or program/fiscal audits completed on programs and activities within SBOE during FY15 and to date in FY16. This includes any reports of the DC Auditor or the Office of the Inspector General. In addition, provide a narrative explanation of steps taken to address any issues raised by the program/fiscal audits.

No investigations, reviews or program/fiscal audits were completed on programs within SBOE during FY15 or to date in FY16.

Q54. Provide a citation of all regulations that were reviewed and/or revised in FY15 and FY16 to date.

Credit Flexibility

- Reviewed OSSE proposed changes to Title 5-E §2201-§2208, and addition of Title 5-A Chapter 22. Did not make proposed changes.
- Issued resolution advising changes to Title 5-E §2203 for to create avenues for credit flexibility. Proposed revisions currently under review in DC Register.



State Diploma

- Revised Title 5-E § 2202 for emergency rulemaking to issue diplomas for Hospitality High
- Added § 2201 to Title 5-A to create State Diploma

Truancy

- Reviewed Title 5-A §2100-2199 as part of report entitled “Challenges Associated with Implementation of the District of Columbia’s New Compulsory Attendance Laws and Recommendations for Addressing Them”

Pre-K Enhancement and Expansion Funding

- Under review: Addition of §3501 to Title 5-A DCMR.

Q55. Are the agency’s information technology needs met? If not, what areas are in need of attention (i.e. computer support, internet and phone functionality, etc.)?

No, the agency is still in need of various IT items, including routers for its 7th floor office space, reconfigured phone tree, QuickBase database upgrades and training, and telephone/teleconference upgrades. The SBOE shifted to an online meeting planning system in April 2015, but this transition has been fraught with technological and financial challenges. In FY15, the SBOE also upgraded a significant portion of its computers and printers and is thankful to OCTO for their assistance.

The technology in the Old Council Chambers (OCC) and City-Wide Conference Center (CCC) remain a significant barrier. As reported last year, the system in the OCC is incompatible with digital technology. The Office of Cable Television has been working with the SBOE and DGS on potential upgrades to the system. It is unclear who would operate the system after upgrade. Further, the CCC’s technology (teleconference ability, projectors, screens) is frequently broken or unavailable.

Q56. Describe the agency’s working relationship with OCTO. Are there areas in need of improvement? If so do they prevent or inhibit the agency from reaching its performance goals?

In general, the SBOE works well with OCTO. Delays in service remain, but are much better than in previous years.

Q57. Please provide an update on the State Board of Education’s office space, when it is expected to move into its expanded space, and any other space needs of the State Board of Education.

The SBOE is pleased to report that construction has begun on a new office suite on the 5th floor of One Judiciary Square. Unfortunately, DGS was not able to locate space large enough to



accommodate the entire SBOE workforce. Construction is estimated to take at least 6 weeks and SBOE anticipates moving some of its staff to the new suite by the end of March 2016.

The lack of a room or rooms that can accommodate confidential meetings remains a grave concern of the SBOE, Ombudsman and Chief Student Advocate. At the current time, SBOE is not aware of any plans to fulfill this need.

Q58. Please describe the State Board's relationship with the Department of General Services.

The SBOE maintains a working relationship with DGS. There have been a number of positive occurrences in FY15 and a number of continued or new frustrations. We look forward to continuing working on our partnership with DGS.

Q59. Please provide an update on the state of the Old Council Chambers. Who manages the Old Council Chambers? Does it meet technology standards? What improvements need to be made to the physical condition of the Old Council Chambers? Please describe any challenges to realizing these improvements.

The Old Council Chambers is controlled by DGS, yet the chairs, tables, and technology in the room are owned by the SBOE. SBOE is often not consulted before the OCC is booked by government or outside entities. This has led to much confusion and frustration because entities that book the room assume they can also use items like those mentioned above. Further, entities that have booked the OCC have caused damage to much of the technology in the room, but SBOE has no recourse for compensation for the damage.

The current technology in the OCC is very outdated and does not meet OCTO standards. It is the understanding of the SBOE that the OCT intends to provide funding for an upgrade to the system in FY16.

The physical condition is also in need of an upgrade, but at this time, SBOE is not aware of any plans to do so by DGS.

