



August 23, 2018

Kathleen Patterson
District of Columbia Auditor
717 14th Street NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Patterson:

DC Public Schools (DCPS) appreciates the opportunity to review and respond to your report dated August 10, 2018, regarding the principals' survey requested by the State Board of Education and conducted by the firm Untold Research.

DCPS is committed to recruiting, developing, and retaining a talented, caring, and diverse team of excellent educators. Strong leadership is a critical lever for establishing a positive school culture and accelerating student achievement. DCPS is committed to ensuring that our principals receive the supports they need to be successful and that our work as a district is informed by school leader voice and feedback. In DCPS' five-year strategic plan, *A Capital Commitment 2017-2022*, we made it a priority to ensure that our educators feel valued and empowered to grow professionally within DCPS, and our focus on this work has not waned.

DCPS appreciates the DC Auditor's effort to survey school leaders about their experiences and challenges in our school district. While this report provides important information from those surveyed (47 of 108 principals contacted responded to the survey, and 5 educators participated in an interview) regarding their experiences and challenges they identified related to funding, resources, and time, it is not comprehensive in nature. DCPS surveys all principals annually, and by doing so ensures an objective and comprehensive evaluation of the diverse principal experiences across our district.

In addition to the annual survey described above, DCPS has built systems and structures that intentionally give a voice within our school system. Through the Chancellor's monthly Principal Cabinet, principals raise issues for consideration and provide their input on the district's priorities. Leadership Academy events are held throughout the year, including a full week of programming during the summer, to provide school leaders with opportunities to collaborate and develop their professional practice. DCPS has also built a strong structure of principal supervisors to develop our school leaders and connect them with central office resources. This system provides for frequent touchpoints and individual coaching catered to each principal's needs. Additionally, DCPS collaborates with the Council of School Officers (CSO) through monthly meetings, trainings, and events throughout the year to advance supports for our school leaders.

DCPS has also created strong pathways to leadership that grow our educators as professionals and school leaders. New principals participate in monthly Professional Learning Communities and are assigned a principal partner. Each principal partner is a successful DCPS principal responsible for mentoring the new leader during their first year in the role. Through our home-grown Mary Jane Patterson Fellowship, DCPS prepares high-performing DCPS employees for principal positions in DCPS schools. Fellows complete a 30-month journey characterized by rich learning experiences including local and national school visits, executive coaching, and principal shadowing. DCPS leaders also have an

opportunity to earn an Executive Master's in Leadership through Georgetown University, which facilitates best-practice sharing across district and charter schools.


DCPS' sustained investment in human capital and our commitment to empowering our leaders have delivered results for our schools. [DCPS' 2017 Stakeholder Survey](#) found that 86 percent of school administrators agree or strongly agree that their school is a great place to teach and learn. In a survey at the end of School Year 2017-2018 focused on DCPS' personnel evaluation system, known as IMPACT, 78 percent of school leader respondents agree or strongly agree that IMPACT is an effective talent management tool for teachers. The same survey found that 98 percent of school leaders respondents stated they feel supported by the IMPACT team.

Because of our commitment to retaining and developing our leaders, DCPS remains a district where leaders want to work. In School Year 2017-2018, DCPS retained 95 percent of our best performing principals. The district's most effective principals are also eligible for bonuses of \$20,000 – \$30,000 for their work. This is a testament to our commitment to providing the resources, supports, and professional development that lead our principals to success and make the district a great place for educators to grow.

DCPS' vision is for all students to feel loved, challenged, and prepared to positively influence society and thrive in life. Our success is dependent upon our recruitment and retention of talented and caring school leaders who are committed to meeting the needs of every student. We look forward to continuing to invest in our school leadership in partnership with our city's leaders. Together, we can ensure that every school is led by a principal who feels valued and empowered to guarantee students reach their full potential through rigorous and joyful learning experiences provided in a nurturing environment.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to respond to your work.

Sincerely,



Amanda Alexander
Interim Chancellor
DC Public Schools

Cc: DC Councilmembers