

# An Evaluation of the Public Schools of the District of Columbia

## **Reform in a Changing Landscape**

Committee for the Five-Year (2009-2013) Summative Evaluation of the  
District of Columbia Public Schools

Board on Testing and Assessment

Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education

NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL  
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COMMITTEE FOR THE FIVE-YEAR (2009-2013)  
SUMMATIVE EVALUATION OF THE  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Carl Cohn (*Cochair*), School of Educational Studies, Claremont Graduate University

Lorraine McDonnell (*Cochair*), Department of Political Science, University of California, Santa Barbara

Mark Dynarski, Pemberton Research, LLC, East Windsor, NJ

David Figlio, Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University

Sharon Lewis, Council of the Great City Schools, Washington, DC

Susanna Loeb, Center for Education Policy Analysis, Stanford University

Kent McGuire, Southern Education Foundation, Atlanta, GA

Jenny Nagaoka, Consortium on Chicago School Research, University of Chicago

Marion Orr, Department of Political Science, Brown University

Diana Pullin, Lynch School of Education, Boston College

Alexandra Beatty, *Study Director*

Judith Koenig, *Senior Program Officer*

Stuart Elliott, *Director, Board on Testing and Assessment* (until December 2013)

Natalie Nielsen, *Acting Director, Board on Testing and Assessment* (from December 2013)

Kelly Arrington, *Senior Program Assistant*

## BOARD ON TESTING AND ASSESSMENT

**David J. Francis** (*Chair*), Texas Institute for Measurement, Evaluation,  
and Statistics, University of Houston

**Gary Chamberlain**, Department of Economics, Harvard University

**Mark Dynarski**, Pemberton Research, LLC, East Windsor, NJ

**Joan Herman**, National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards,  
and Student Testing, University of California, Los Angeles

**Michael Kane**, Test Validity, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ

**Sharon Lewis**, Council of Great City Schools, Washington, DC

**Robert Mare**, Department of Sociology, University of California,  
Los Angeles

**Diana C. Pullin**, School of Education, Boston College

**Ann Marie Ryan**, Department of Psychology, Michigan State University

**Brian Stecher**, Education Program, The RAND Corporation, Santa  
Monica, CA

**John Robert Warren**, Department of Sociology, University of Minnesota

**Mark Wilson**, Graduate School of Education, University of California,  
Berkeley

**Rebecca Zwick**, Research and Development, Educational Testing Service,  
Santa Barbara, CA

**Natalie Nielsen**, *Acting Director*

**Alexandra Beatty**, *Senior Program Officer*

**Judith Koenig**, *Senior Program Officer*

**Kelly Arrington**, *Senior Program Assistant*

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We are also very grateful to the researchers who assisted us. We thank Jeffrey Henig of Teachers College, Columbia University, for his analysis of D.C.'s reforms in the context of reform in other urban districts; Drew Gitomer, Kevin Crouse, and Jeanette Joyce of Rutgers University for their analysis of the IMPACT teacher evaluation system in the context of other such systems; and Cory Koedel of the University of Missouri, Columbia, for his analysis of technical aspects of value-added modeling. We are also deeply grateful to Colleen Robinson of Boston College for her able and extensive assistance with legal research pertaining to the Public Education Reform Amendment Act.

We also wish to acknowledge the members of the George Washington University consortium, DC-EdCORE, who provided analyses for the city that we drew on for this report. Members of this group attended many of the committee's meetings and consulted with the committee on their work; we thank them for their technical expertise and collegial approach.

We also want to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the staff of the National Research Council (NRC) who contributed to this project.

As the study director, Alexandra Beatty assumed many more duties than we can list. Perhaps most importantly, she assiduously gathered much of the information that is presented here and never wavered in her commitment to helping the committee shape this report into a useful resource for the residents and leaders of the District of Columbia. Judy Koenig was instrumental in assembling critical information and assisting the committee in developing its analyses of the DCPS teacher evaluation program and of the student outcomes data.

The committee operated under the aegis of the NRC's Board on Testing and Assessment, beginning its work under director Stuart Elliott and continuing under director Natalie Nielsen. Each provided leadership and thoughtful suggestions and support to the committee. Jordyn White patiently transformed graphs, tables, and spreadsheets into legible graphics for the report. Marisa Gerstein Pineau assisted in analyzing interview transcripts, and Kelly Arrington provided her usual top-notch administrative support at every phase of the project with good cheer.

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This report has been reviewed in draft form by individuals chosen for their diverse perspectives and technical expertise, in accordance with procedures approved by the NRC's Report Review Committee. The purpose of this independent review is to provide candid and critical comments that will assist the institution in making its published report as sound as possible and to ensure that the report meets institutional standards for objectivity, evidence, and responsiveness to the study charge. The review comments and draft manuscript remain confidential to protect the integrity of the deliberative process.

We thank the following individuals for their review of this report: Julian Betts, Department of Economics, University of California, San Diego; Thomas Byrd, Chairman, Ward 8 Education Council, Washington, DC; Jennifer P. Cheatham, Superintendent, Madison Metropolitan School District, Madison, WI; HyeSook Chung, Executive Director, DC Action for Children, Washington, DC; John Q. Easton, Distinguished Senior Fellow, Spencer Foundation, Chicago, IL; Richard F. Elmore, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University; Mary Filardo, Executive Director, 21st Century School Fund, Washington, DC; Paul Goren, Superintendent, Evanston/Skokie District 65, Evanston, IL; Mary Levy, Education Finance and Policy Analyst, Washington, DC; Rebecca Maynard, Graduate School

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Although the reviewers listed above provided many constructive comments and suggestions, they were not asked to endorse the conclusions or recommendations nor did they see the final draft of the report before its release. The review of this report was overseen by Caswell A. Evans, College of Dentistry, University of Illinois at Chicago, and Edward H. Haertel, School of Education, Stanford University. Appointed by the NRC, they were responsible for making certain that an independent examination of this report was carried out in accordance with institutional procedures and that all review comments were carefully considered. Responsibility for the final content of this report rests entirely with the authoring committee and the institution.

Carl Cohn, *Cochair*  
Lorraine McDonnell, *Cochair*  
Committee for the Five-Year (2009-2013)  
Summative Evaluation of the  
District of Columbia's Public Schools



## Foreword

When the District of Columbia Council passed the Public Education Reform Amendment Act (PERAA) in 2007, the goal was to improve the city's public school system. However, the Council also recognized how important it would be to have an objective evaluation of the law's effects, and for that purpose, they turned to the Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education (DBASSE) in the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS).

The NAS is a private, nonprofit organization, chartered by Congress to provide scientific advice when asked. The NAS was pleased to undertake this project, both because of its importance in educational policy and because our home is in the District of Columbia. In so doing, we hoped to help the city answer vital questions about its efforts to improve its public schools. We also hoped that the result would be useful to other cities or states.

There have been many analyses of education in the District of Columbia: its problems, its operations, and its programs. However, although evaluations of public schooling are common, few examine the ways that a broad restructuring of school governance has influenced an entire school system. In the present instance, the D.C. Council was seeking a broad assessment that would help its leaders and citizens learn whether PERAA had put the schools on a track for improvement.

The NAS project faced two significant challenges. The first was that there is no clear model for this kind of broad evaluation. The second challenge concerned the nature and limitations of the available evidence. Most evaluations by the NAS examine, assess, and resolve findings from

previous empirical research. As in other localities, the available evidence about the D.C. school system included very little peer-reviewed research. Thus, in order to develop conclusions and recommendations that would be both practical and scientifically defensible, the committee had to sift and winnow a mix of incomplete data, descriptive documents, and other kinds of information.

The project was carried out in two phases. The report of the first phase *A Plan for Evaluating the District of Columbia's Public Schools*, responded to the first challenge: it presented an evaluation model designed to meet the goal set by PERAA. This report describes the second phase, an evaluation based on that model.

As with all projects of the NAS, the work was led by volunteer experts. Together with cochairs, Carl Cohn and Lorraine McDonnell, they brought a wealth of experience and expertise to the task. On behalf of the NAS, I offer deep thanks to the cochairs and their fellow committee members, who represented the best of the institution in their commitment to finding a scientifically sound way to meet the broad charge they were given. I also thank DC-EdCORE, a consortium of research agencies led by Michael Feuer, Dean of the School of Education and Human Development at George Washington University, for its contributions to this report.

The committee had the opportunity to learn about the work of many officials and other staff members within D.C.'s education agencies and schools. Committee members met many exemplars of dedication to improving educational conditions and outcomes for public school students. This report is intended to support them and to build on the hard work they have already done. We sincerely hope that this report will be helpful to them, to the D.C. Council, and to all city residents concerned about the future of their children and their schools.

Robert M. Hauser, *Executive Director*  
Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education  
National Academy of Sciences

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\*These appendixes are available at <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/21743/an-evaluation-of-the-public-schools-of-the-district-of-columbia>.



## Summary

In 2007, the District of Columbia passed a law (Public Education Reform Amendment Act [PERAA]) that gave control of its public schools to its mayor. The law's purpose was to allow leaders flexibility so they could make bold changes to improve a school system that had been performing poorly for decades. The law also called for an independent evaluation of how well the public schools fared under new governance, to be carried out by a committee of the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences. The D.C. Council asked the committee to assess

- whether the law's expectations have been met and whether the changes have led to improved coordination, efficiency, and accountability;
- the extent to which the actions school leaders took were consistent with research and best practices; and
- changes in the conditions for learning in the schools and outcomes for students 7 years after the governance change.

These questions called for a detailed analysis of PERAA's provisions and the goals it was intended to achieve, a review of the changes the city has made in response, an assessment of actions taken by education leaders empowered by the law, and a review of progress in both the conditions for learning in the schools and the outcomes for students since the law was passed.

It was necessary to seek an exceptionally wide range of evidence to answer the questions in the committee's charge, using publicly available

data and information; information provided by city agencies; papers commissioned by the committee; interviews; and other reports and analyses, including independent reports prepared for this project by the Education Consortium on Research and Evaluation (DC-EdCORE). Although the committee was able to obtain evidence on many issues, our work was hampered by difficulty in obtaining some of the information we sought from the city.

**WERE PERAA'S EXPECTATIONS MET,  
AND DID ITS CHANGES BRING ABOUT IMPROVED  
COORDINATION, EFFICIENCY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY?**

We conclude that the city has executed most of what was called for by PERAA. For example, the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and the Public Charter School Board (PCSB) are carrying out their functions and have used the flexibility and authority they gained under the law to pursue improvements that show promise. In addition, as specified by the law, three new agencies created by PERAA, the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME), the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), and the State Board of Education (SBOE) are operating as called for in the law.

There are several areas for which the results so far do not match PERAA's expectations, however. The law called for a body that could coordinate across the city agencies concerned with the well-being of children, adolescents, and families: this body was created but was subsequently defunded. The law also called for a data warehouse that would support interagency coordination by allowing data sharing across agencies and other functions: despite progress in data collections efforts, this data infrastructure is not in place. [Conclusion 3-1]

PERAA was also intended to promote coordination among the education agencies, efficiency, and accountability. However, coordination among all of the education agencies is more the product of collegial approaches than institutional structures and incentives. The missions and lines of authority among the three oversight bodies (DME, OSSE, and the SBOE) are not clearly delineated. At present, none of the three agencies is clearly recognized as having the primary responsibility for monitoring and overseeing the quality of public education for all students. OSSE, by far the largest of the three, is not consistently functioning as an effective state education authority, and it has not yet earned the full confidence of officials in other agencies who rely on it. [Conclusion 3-1] DME and SBOE have neither the resources to monitor effectively nor the meaningful authority to oversee the approximately 83,000 students enrolled in DCPS and the charter schools. [Conclusions 3-2 and 3-4]

The issue of monitoring is a complex one in D.C. for two reasons. First, D.C. functions as both a state and a city. PERAA created OSSE to

perform the specific state functions associated with federal compliance and contracting, but it also gave the agency additional responsibilities, not all of which were well defined. Second, the city's public schools were operated by a single district (DCPS) until the first charter schools were established in the mid-1990s. Today, nearly half the city's public school students are enrolled in charter schools, and there are 62 districts (local education agencies): DCPS and the 61 chartered entities. The governance structure outlined out in PERAA did not address the changing balance between traditional public schools and charters and how that might affect the governance challenge.

PERAA called for an ombudsman to help meet the goal of greater transparency and accountability for public education in D.C. That position was created, abolished, and then reestablished, but it has yet to play a significant role. In addition, the budgeting process for education expenditures is neither simpler nor more transparent than it was before PERAA. [Conclusion 3-3]

The current governance structure represents a reasonable response to the provisions of PERAA but leaves two issues for the city to consider: whether the current oversight structure provides sufficient monitoring of the educational opportunities provided to students attending DCPS and charter schools throughout the city, and how best to oversee the education of all students attending any publicly funded school. [Conclusion 3-5]

### WERE THE ACTIONS SCHOOL LEADERS TOOK CONSISTENT WITH RESEARCH AND BEST PRACTICES?

We focused on one of the most prominent actions taken by DCPS under its new leadership, the decision to emphasize improving teacher quality using a new evaluation system, IMPACT. It was not possible to examine similar strategies for the charter schools because no programmatic strategies apply across all of them. We examined IMPACT's design and implementation plan and reviewed data on changes in the teacher workforce. Based on the information available to us, IMPACT—with its multiple measures of teacher performance, feedback and supports provided to teachers, and opportunities for professional development—generally reflects the guidance available in research literature for teacher evaluation systems of its type. [Conclusions 4-1 and 4-2]

We have several concerns that we believe it would be advisable for DCPS to address. The city articulated a number of goals for IMPACT but has not yet developed a plan for evaluating progress toward meeting them. DCPS should monitor how well IMPACT serves its intended purposes, particularly the goal of improving teaching in schools serving lower-achieving students. The city placed a high priority on improving the quality of the teacher workforce, under the premise that improving teacher quality would

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lead to improved conditions and outcomes for all students. The evidence available to date shows that most DCPS teachers receive high effectiveness ratings; however, the highest-rated teachers are not distributed equitably across the wards, with fewer of them serving the most disadvantaged students. DCPS has more work to do in ensuring that it has a team of highly rated teachers in every school; we have no systematic information about the teachers in charter schools. [Conclusions 4-3, 4-4, and 4-5]

IMPACT provides important information about DCPS educators but it is generally not used by the charter schools and little systematic information about charter school teachers is available. The city would benefit from maintaining a wide range of data about teachers in both DCPS and the charter schools. [Conclusion 4-6]

### WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT LEARNING CONDITIONS 7 YEARS AFTER THE GOVERNANCE CHANGE?

The conditions that should be in place to promote learning encompass not only academic offerings and resources, but also a healthy and productive school climate and supports for the challenges faced by many student groups. We examined a set of topics that reflect the broad scope of issues that should be monitored to ensure that all students have an equitable opportunity to learn.

The limited evidence available to us shows evidence of efforts to improve learning conditions, but also suggests that there are differences across student groups and wards in access to educational opportunity and the quality of the educational experience. The committee could find very little information about learning conditions in charter schools because many types of information are not collected systematically for this sector. We found slightly more information about DCPS but still saw many gaps in the information needed. [Conclusion 5-1]

Of significant concern is the fact that the governance structure with respect to learning opportunities is diffuse: no one entity has both the responsibility and the authority for monitoring the provision of education and supports for students, particularly those at risk for school failure, across both the DCPS and charter schools. We believe that a single entity should be responsible for this essential function systemwide: to meet this responsibility, the entity in charge will need to maintain and make publicly accessible data about students with particular needs, including those with disabilities, English-language learners, and students in poverty; school climate, including discipline, attendance, safety, and facilities; and academic supports for learning. [Conclusions 5-2 and 5-3]

## WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT STUDENT OUTCOMES 7 YEARS AFTER THE GOVERNANCE CHANGE?

In order to understand outcomes for students it is important to look not only at the most readily available information—test data and graduation rates—but also other indicators of outcomes and attainment, including indicators of school behavior and postsecondary attainment. The committee did not have the data needed to examine most of this information. We found that, in general, scores from both the District of Columbia Comprehensive Assessment System (DC CAS) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) increased between 2007 and 2014 across most student groups. The increase is larger for math than it is for reading; however, indicators of proficiency in both subjects remain low. Graduation rates have fluctuated from year to year, with no discernable pattern, but they, too, remain disturbingly low. [Conclusions 6-1 and 6-4]

Black and Hispanic students, those with disabilities, those eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, and English-language learners are much more likely to be in the lowest performance categories than other students. Some improvement is evident since 2009, but more than half of these students still score below proficient. There is little indication that these performance disparities—in test scores or in graduation rates—are lessening. [Conclusions 6-1, 6-2, and 6-4]

The signs of improvement are positive, but a more complete picture of student outcomes is needed. To better understand outcomes for D.C. students, the city needs improved reporting of test results to provide more detailed information about student performance. It also needs to make data available that will cover a range of outcomes and allow detailed analyses of trends across time and among student groups. [Conclusions 6-3 and 6-5]

## RECOMMENDATIONS

We can document changes that occurred over the past 7 years but it is not possible to attribute any of them directly to PERAA. The law gave the city a mechanism with which to address problems, and it has done so. The committee sees reasons for optimism about the future for D.C.'s public schools: DCPS and the PCSB have made choices that show promise, and the city has sustained its focus on its improvement over several leadership changes.

Nevertheless, our evaluation shows that:

- Monitoring and oversight of the needs of students with particular needs, including students with disabilities, English-language learners, low-income students, and others is not adequate.

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- DCPS schools in the lowest income sections of the city have fewer teachers with high IMPACT ratings and provide less access to advanced coursework than other DCPS schools; there were no data available on these issues for the charter schools.
- There are stark gaps in academic achievement and graduation rates across student groups.

Our three recommendations are intended to help the city build on the work it has already done to address this fundamental challenge. Our conclusions in each of the broad areas we examined stressed the need for improvement in the way the city collects and uses information about public education. A significant array of data, documentation, and reports concerning the city's schools is available, but these materials are widely scattered and not structured to support districtwide evaluation. More important, however, is that no one entity is currently responsible for coordinating information from across the education agencies and across all the public schools.

Regardless of the governance structure in place, a reliable source of comprehensive information about the functioning of the public schools will be crucial to improving monitoring and accountability. More accessible data would also reveal progress the city is making in education, and greater accessibility would likely build public trust and patience during the time it takes to pursue lasting change.

**RECOMMENDATION 1** The District of Columbia should have a comprehensive data warehouse that makes basic information about the school system available in one place. That information should be readily accessible online to parents, the community, and researchers. That information should include data on the school system as a whole and at more detailed levels. Building such a warehouse will take time, but it can begin with the data collection efforts already in place. An optimal data warehouse would have the following characteristics:

- It would integrate and track data that are relevant to schooling and students across DCPS and the charter schools and eventually across the education, justice, and human service agencies.
- It would provide data about learning conditions in all public schools, DCPS and the charters, and their students covering students with particular needs, including those with disabilities, English-language learners, and students in poverty; school climate, including discipline, attendance, safety, and facilities; and academic supports for learning.
- It would provide data about outcomes for all public school students, in DCPS and the charters, covering graduation rates, per-

formance on tests including college entrance exams, attendance and truancy, course-taking and completion, college enrollment and progression, and career outcomes.

- It would be usable and accessible to researchers, educators, parents, and the public. The format would be structured to allow ready access to data and analysis in ways that can be customized to the needs of different users, including parents and other nonspecialists.

PERAA called for an interagency coordinating body to develop a data warehouse of this type. Our recommendation for a centralized data warehouse is more comprehensive than PERAA's specifications, and we believe that it should serve a broader purpose—that is, that such a resource should not be used only for coordinating data across city agencies, but also for helping the city effectively monitor all of its public schools and students.

At present, no single entity in D.C. is looking analytically at the way all of the city's public school students are being educated and making sure that certain basic conditions are provided. We distinguish between a responsibility to ensure that basic conditions are met and interference with the way DCPS or the charter schools make the decisions that are their responsibility about how to fulfill their educational missions.

Because D.C. functions as a state with 62 school districts—DCPS and 61 charter entities—it has a responsibility to collect and maintain the systemwide data needed to measure progress toward meeting the objective of ensuring an equitable education for all public school students. If the city does decide to have a single entity with responsibility across DCPS and the charter schools, it would be reasonable to consider transforming OSSE—although it currently has a number of problems—into that entity.

At the same time, the city would benefit from having access to ongoing, independent evaluations of its progress. D.C. would derive great benefit from having a program of ongoing evaluation, and a comprehensive data warehouse could be the foundation of that program. Such a program would benefit researchers, education policy makers, and city residents.

**RECOMMENDATION 2** The District of Columbia should establish institutional arrangements that will support ongoing independent evaluation of its education system. Whatever structure is developed, three conditions should be met:

- The evaluation entity should have sufficient resources to collect and analyze primary data, including at the school level, without being entirely dependent on district-generated test and administrative data.

- Evaluations should be conducted by experts with the qualifications needed for specific tasks. Ideally, the structure will allow the city to benefit from the expertise of external researchers and practitioners who specialize in teaching and learning, curriculum, testing and measurement, and finance and policy.
- All products produced by the entity should undergo rigorous peer review.

We were not asked to make recommendations to the city about its governance structure, but we close with a recommendation regarding priorities for the city as it approaches the 10-year anniversary of PERAA. PERAA provided the city with a structure it could use to make bold changes, but a governance change by itself cannot be expected to bring about the desired changes. Using the flexibility provided by PERAA, the city has made a solid start. The next step is to build on it in addressing the major long-standing challenges in D.C. These challenges are at the heart of the findings from our evaluation because they have persisted in spite of significant progress made in the years since PERAA.

**RECOMMENDATION 3** The primary objective of the District of Columbia for its public schools should be to address the serious and persistent disparities in learning opportunities and academic progress across student groups and wards by attending to

- centralized, systemwide monitoring and oversight of all public schools and their students, with particular attention to high-need student groups;
- the fair distribution of educational resources across schools and wards;
- ongoing assessment of how well strategies for improving teacher quality are meeting their goals;
- more effective collaboration among public agencies and with the private sector to encourage cross-sector problem solving for the city's schools;
- accessible, useful, and transparent data about D.C. public schools, including charters, that are tailored to the diverse groups with a stake in the system; and
- measures to strengthen public trust in education in a diverse, highly mobile city.

# 1

## Introduction

Much has happened since 2007, when the District of Columbia gave control of its public schools to its mayor and made other governance changes through the Public Education Reform Amendment Act (PERAA). Then-Mayor Adrian Fenty acted promptly, filling the new office of chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) with an individual who used her authority and flexibility to make bold changes. The new leadership of DCPS and the other education agencies—the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), the D.C. State Board of Education, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, and the Public Charter School Board (PCSB)—followed by implementing the changes called for by the law.

PERAA reflected high hopes that a significant shake-up of the public schools and a leader with a free hand would allow D.C. to break through decades of stagnation and poor outcomes for the most disadvantaged students. Recognizing that many people—parents, education officials, and teachers, as well as many other citizens—would be eager for reliable information about how the schools fared after the new law was implemented, the Council of the District of Columbia included in PERAA a requirement for an independent evaluation. This report describes the results of the second phase of that evaluation. It was carried out by the Committee for the Five-Year (2009-2013) Summative Evaluation of the District of Columbia Public Schools, appointed by the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences.

The first phase of the evaluation resulted in the report, *A Plan for Evaluating the District of Columbia's Public Schools* (National Research

Council, 2011). That report (which we refer to as the Phase I report) recommended that the District of Columbia develop a plan for a sustainable, ongoing program of evaluation that yields reliable information, which can be used to support continued improvements to the school system: see Box 1-1. The report noted that there is no well-established model for ongoing evaluation of school districts, and that any district would benefit from a stable source of such information, whether it makes bold changes in governance or not.<sup>1</sup> The report also provided a model for structuring the information an evaluation might collect: see Figures 1-1 and 1-2.<sup>2</sup>

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The charge to the authors of this second report was to evaluate changes in the D.C. public schools during the period from 2009 to 2013, addressing the questions outlined in PERAA concerning the primary areas of school system responsibility. The complete charge is shown in Box 1-2.

In carrying out its charge, the committee was guided by the evaluation framework from the Phase I report and by specifications of the D.C. Council, which, with the concurrence and cooperation of the mayor, the chancellor of DCPS, and the State Superintendent of Education, funded this study. The sponsors requested that the evaluation address the questions in the framework covering four broad areas: see Box 1-3. Thus, for each of those areas, this evaluation addresses the following questions:

**Structures and Roles:** Were all structures and roles outlined in PERAA implemented and working as planned? Did “clearer functions and lines of authority” lead to better coordination and more efficient operations, which in turn promoted improvements in teaching and learning?”

**Strategies:** Did D.C. education officials “do what they said they would do, and how well did they do it”? Were the strategies in use developed out of best practices and executed well?

**Conditions:** Did conditions improve overall and across diverse schools and students?

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<sup>1</sup>D.C. public schools are now governed by 62 entities that function as districts, DCPS and the 61 entities that operate the charter schools, an aspect of school governance in the city that we discuss throughout the report.

<sup>2</sup>We refer readers to the earlier report for a more detailed description of the proposed evaluation model and other background and contextual information for this second phase of the evaluation.

**BOX 1-1**  
**Principal Recommendation from Phase 1 Report,**  
***A Plan for Evaluating the District of Columbia's Public Schools***

We recommend that the District of Columbia establish an evaluation program that includes long-term monitoring and public reporting of key indicators as well as a portfolio of in-depth studies of high-priority issues. The indicator system should provide long-term trend data to track how well the programs and structure of the city's public schools are working, the quality and implementation of key strategies undertaken to improve education, the conditions for student learning, and the capacity of the system to attain valued outcomes. The in-depth studies should build on indicator data to answer specific questions about each of the primary aspects of public education for which the District is responsible: personnel (teachers, principals, and others); classroom teaching and learning; vulnerable children and youth; family and community engagement; and operations, management, and facilities.

SOURCE: National Research Council (2011, p. 5).

**Outcomes:** Were valued outcomes attained overall and were they equitably achieved for diverse schools and students?

This evaluation is different, in its broad scope, from the more targeted evaluations school districts often undertake. The committee could not look in depth at every issue of importance in the city's schools—any of which might yield a book-length report—or conduct systematic audits of city offices and schools. Our charge required us instead to explore key questions in each broad area and develop reasonable conclusions about the progress of public education in the District of Columbia. For example, our charge included financial management. A thorough evaluation of budget expenditures and management would require resources and expertise that were beyond the committee's scope but we focused on the transparency of the budgeting process, and on the distribution of other sorts of resources, such as learning opportunities and highly qualified teachers.

We examined the major goals the law was designed to achieve, some of the strategies that the city's education leaders pursued to achieve those goals, and changes in learning conditions and outcomes since PERAA was enacted. However, given a complex and constantly changing system, we emphasize that it is not possible to trace any particular change in conditions or in outcomes for students directly to the effects of PERAA. Countless factors have affected developments in D.C.'s public schools since 2007. It is

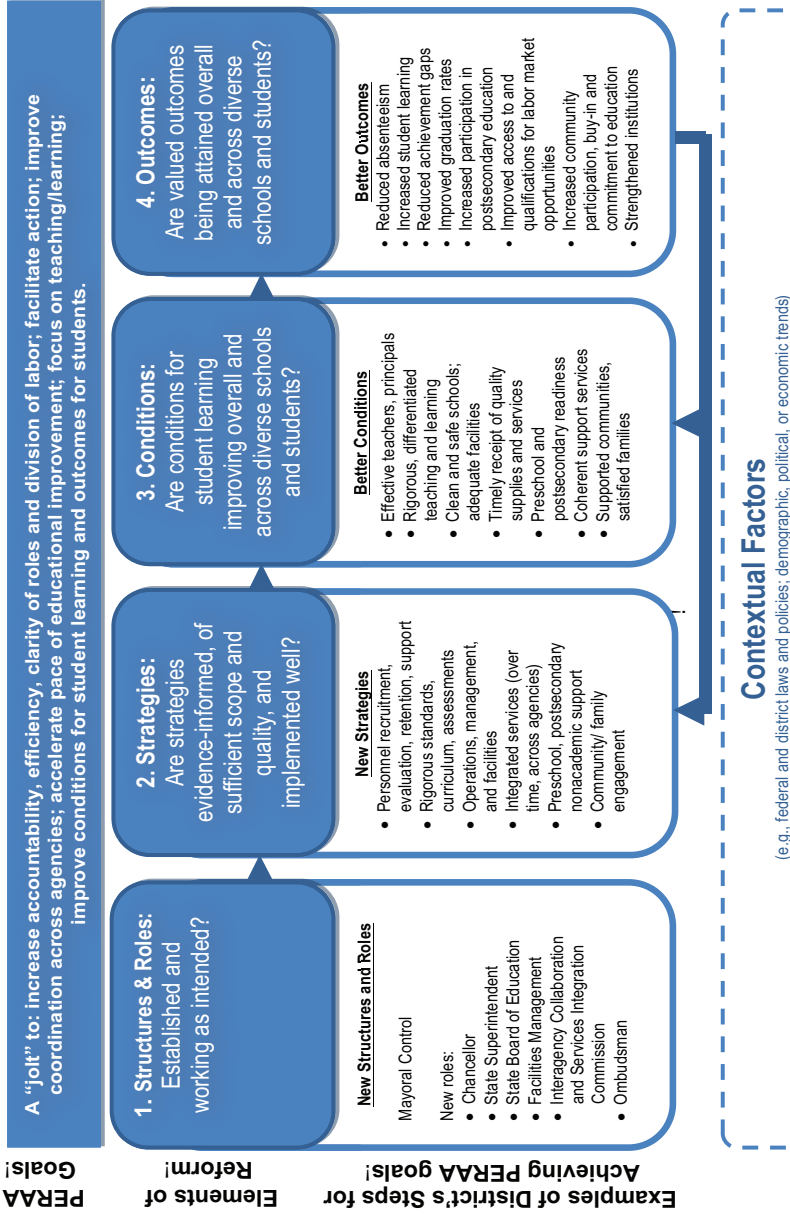


FIGURE 1-1 A framework for evaluating DC public education under the Public Education Reform Amendment Act. SOURCE: National Research Council (2011, p. 7).

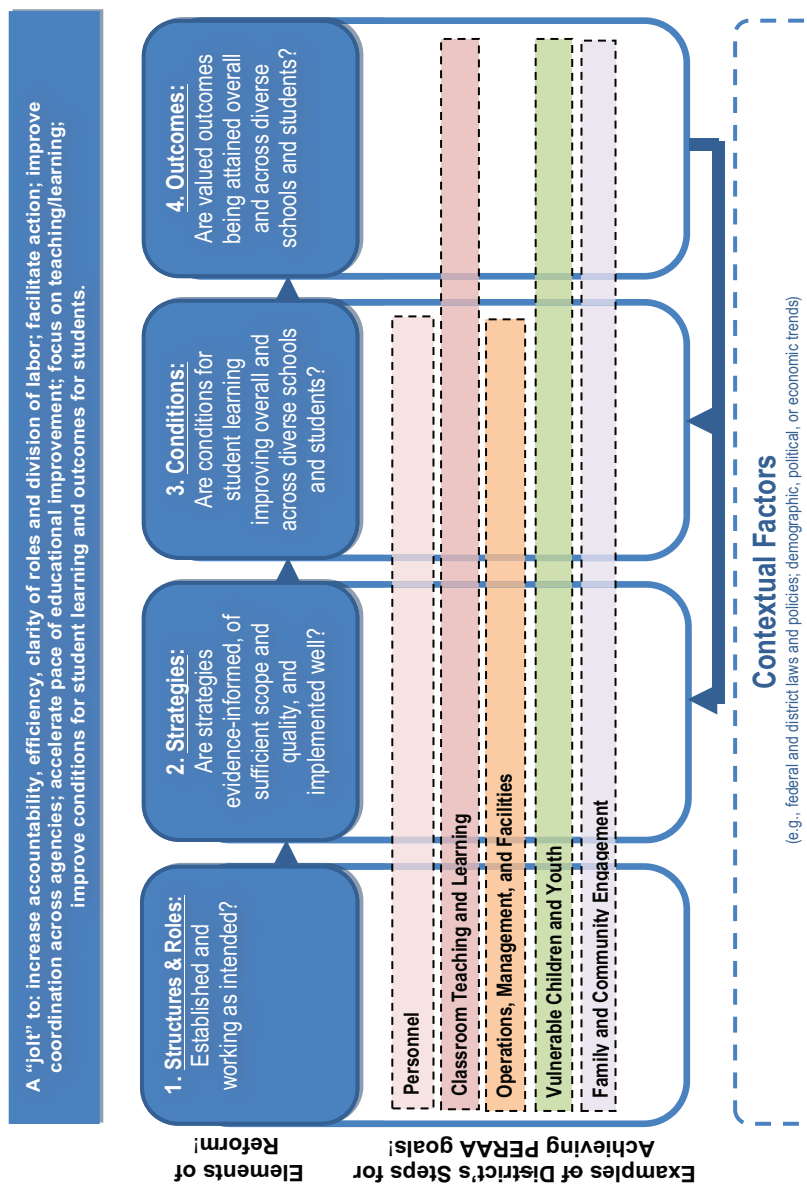


FIGURE 1-2 Evaluation priorities in key areas of district responsibility.  
SOURCE: National Research Council (2011, p. 8).

### **BOX 1-2 Committee Charge**

The National Research Council (NRC) will establish an ad hoc committee to write a comprehensive 5-year summative evaluation report for Phase II of the initiative to evaluate the District of Columbia's public schools. Consistent with the recommendations in the 2011 NRC report entitled *A Plan for Evaluating the District of Columbia's Public Schools*, the NRC will commission a local research consortium, DC-EdCORE, to carry out a set of studies that will provide input to the summative evaluation report. The issuance of the 2011 report completed Phase I of the initiative, and DC-EdCORE was formed in response to the recommendations of that report. The new NRC committee will commission studies by DC-EdCORE and hold open meetings to discuss the results of DC-EdCORE studies and other relevant research. The committee will write a consensus evaluation report that describes changes in the public schools during the period from 2009 to 2013 and also addresses the questions outlined in the PERAA legislation about effects on business practices; human resources operations and human capital strategies; academic plans; and student achievement.

### **BOX 1-3 The Four Subject Areas to Be Covered by the Evaluation**

- 1. Business practices and strategies:** including organizational structure and roles, financial management, operations management, facilities and maintenance; resource allocations; public accountability, interagency collaboration, stakeholder engagement and responsiveness.
- 2. Human resources operations and human capital strategies:** including the number of and percentage of highly qualified teachers under No Child Left Behind and IMPACT, retention rate for effective teachers, and the schools and wards served by effective teachers. The length of time principals and administrators serve, types of leadership strategies used, and responsibilities of central office versus school-level leadership.
- 3. Academic plans:** including integration of curriculum and program-specific focus into schools, grade progression, and credit accumulation.
- 4. Student achievement:** including a detailed description of student achievement that includes academic growth, proficiency, and nonacademic values.

not possible to compare what has happened in the schools with what would have happened had PERAA not changed their governance. Nor is it possible to disentangle the changes brought about by PERAA from the many other developments and reforms that occurred at the same time that PERAA was being implemented. Instead, we conducted a top-level examination of what is working well and which areas need additional attention, and we offer questions for the city to consider.

## EVALUATION APPROACH

The Committee for the Five-Year (2009-2013) Summative Evaluation of the District of Columbia Public Schools was composed of 10 individuals with expertise in relevant areas, including program evaluation, school governance and organization, urban education reform, teaching and learning, teacher training and evaluation, and student achievement and preparedness. Their backgrounds and experience include district governance, policy making, teaching, and research. None of the committee members resided in the District of Columbia or had any direct links with the D.C. government.

### Data Sources

The committee held six meetings in 2013 and 2014. Four of those meetings included public sessions at which the committee heard from many individuals who came to share their perspectives on public schooling in the city, describe challenges and problems they had observed, and answer the committee's questions about their experiences and district functions. The committee also collected and synthesized a wide range of other information, including the results of complex statistical analyses, information obtained from D.C. agencies, external analyses, and structured interviews. Our use of these sources varies by chapter, depending on the questions that the chapter addresses and the nature of the available information. In each of the following chapters, we discuss the specific information on which our analyses are based.

When drawing conclusions from the evidence, we gave precedence to results from empirical analyses published in peer-reviewed journals. However, as is often the case with evaluations, reports of this type that addressed the D.C. schools were scarce. To compensate for this limitation, we placed the greatest weight on evidence that could be corroborated through multiple sources.

### D.C. Agencies and Websites

The committee was highly dependent on information and data either provided by city agencies in response to our requests or available on their public websites. Appendix A summarizes the requests we made to education agencies and the materials we received. We sent individual requests to the offices that were most likely to hold particular information, and we submitted all of the requests as a package to the heads of all relevant agencies, along with a request for their support in providing the information. All the written materials the committee received from city agencies are available in the public access file of the National Academy of Sciences.

Overall, we were hampered by difficulty in obtaining some of the information we sought from the city. As Appendix A shows, many of our requests for information from the education agencies were not filled for more than a year, and some were never filled. The D.C. government has seen considerable staff turnover in the years since PERAA was passed, and several current staff members had difficulties locating data and records that predated their tenure. We are grateful for the efforts of many city employees who assisted us, but we note the lack of a central source for most information and of personnel available to assist us in coordinating the information we sought.

It was surprisingly difficult to obtain even the data needed to present a clear picture of some basic trends in the years since PERAA was enacted. Though data, reports, and other materials are posted across several websites, there is no one resource among the city's many websites where complete information about the entire jurisdiction is posted.

The DCPS website provides summary data characterizing its own students, schools, and educators (these data do not cover the charter schools), but as we discuss in Chapter 3, neither the home page of the OSSE nor a new website called LearnDC, which provides some data for DCPS and the charter schools, guides the user to summative data about all public school students and schools.<sup>3</sup> The website of the PCSB provides some useful information about the charter schools, but it offers little summative data about the students, schools, and educators in that sector.<sup>4</sup> In addition, some of the data we received from the agencies were difficult to reconcile.

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<sup>3</sup>See <http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/About+DCPS/Who+We+Are> [May 2015]; <http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/About+DCPS/DCPS+Data> [May 2015]; <http://osse.dc.gov/service/data> [May 2015]; and <http://www.learnDC.org/> [April 2015].

<sup>4</sup>See <http://www.dcpsb.org/resource-hub> [April 2015].

### Commissioned Analyses

The committee also had access to data analyses conducted by an independent group, the Education Consortium on Research and Evaluation (DC-EdCORE). The Phase I report (National Research Council, 2011) recommended that the city support the development of an independent research consortium that could carry out ongoing data collection and analysis to use in evaluating the education system. George Washington University sponsored the development of DC-EdCORE as a first step in establishing such a consortium.

The National Academy of Sciences' contract with the city for this evaluation included a subcontract for DC-EdCORE to collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data on particular topics of interest to the city: see Box 1-4. DC-EdCORE produced five reports that address specific questions related to those topics; those reports were submitted to the city before this report was published. We have drawn on data in these reports that were relevant to our evaluation questions, particularly in Chapters 4 and 6 (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d).

#### **BOX 1-4** **The Role and Products of DC-EdCORE**

Because the committee was not in a position to conduct primary data collection and analysis, the design for the evaluation included subcontracts for a new entity, DC-EdCORE, to perform this work on selected topics and prepare reports on its findings. DC-EdCORE is entirely independent of the National Research Council and the committee. Other research organizations, including the American Institutes for Research, Mathematica, and Policy Studies Associates, collaborated with DC-EdCORE to carry out this work.

EdCORE produced five annual reports, plus one supplement. The Office of the D.C. Auditor determined the scope of these reports based on the contents of PERAA. Members of the EdCORE team attended meetings of our committee to discuss the development of its reports, and it made drafts of the reports available to the committee for comment, but the reports are solely the product of EdCORE. The committee notes throughout this report when it used information from the DC-EdCORE reports.

The DC-EdCORE reports are available on the website of the D.C. Auditor, at <http://dcauditor.org/reports> [May 2015]. To find a report, it is necessary to search the report list by year. Below is a synopsis of the contents of the five reports.

*continued*

**BOX 1-4 Continued**

*Report No. 1: School Year 2010-2011* (submitted July 15, 2013): Snapshot descriptions of events and indicators associated with three of the primary evaluation topics (business practices, human resources, and academic plans) as of school year 2010-2011, plus description of selected indicators of student achievement between 2006-2007 and 2010-2011 (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2013a).

*Report No. 2: School Year 2011-2012* (submitted September 6, 2013): Snapshot descriptions of events and indicators associated with two of the primary evaluation topics (business practices, human resources) as of school year 2011-2012; description of academic plans for years 2006-2007 through 2011-2012; and description of selected indicators of student achievement between 2006-2007 and 2011-2012 (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2013b).

*Report No. 3: Trends in Teacher Effectiveness in the District of Columbia Public Schools* (submitted August 22, 2014): Presentation of data on DCPS teacher effectiveness, as measured by IMPACT, and teacher retention, and data on trends in teacher effectiveness by ward and socioeconomic status<sup>a</sup> (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2014a).

*The Impact of Replacing Principals on Student Achievement in DC Public Schools (DCPS)* (submitted December 3, 2014; supplement to the third report): Analysis of changes in student achievement that occurred when principals who left DCPS schools were replaced, for school years 2007-2008 through 2010-2011 (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2014b).

*Report No. 4: A Closer Look at Student Achievement Trends in the District of Columbia* (submitted September 5, 2014): Analysis of trends in student achievement in D.C. public schools between 2006-2007 and 2012-2013 (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2014c).

*Report No. 5: Community and Family Engagement in DC Public Education: Officials' Reports and Stakeholders' Perceptions* (submitted November 5, 2015): Summary of findings from interviews with city education officials and community members on the subject of city efforts to improve public engagement (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2014d).

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<sup>a</sup> The committee noted the potential conflict of interest that arose when Mathematica was asked to conduct the analyses related to IMPACT because that organization had played a role in designing the system, and we called that issue to the attention of EdCORE. The committee had the opportunity to review and comment on the research plan for the task Mathematica was given, as well as a rough draft of the report.

In addition, the committee commissioned three papers to explore several topics in greater depth. One paper (Henig, 2014) analyzed reforms in other urban districts that provide useful comparisons with what D.C. has done. The other two papers addressed aspects of the new teacher evaluation system, IMPACT, that was one of the first improvement strategies adopted by DCPS after PERAA: one (Koedel, 2014) explored technical questions associated with value-added modeling (used in the calculation of quantitative ratings of teachers used in the evaluation), and the other (Gitomer et al., 2014) examined the system as a whole in the context of similar efforts around the country.

### Interviews

To understand D.C.'s responses to PERAA and the structure and functioning of the city's education agencies, the committee conducted 15 structured interviews in 2014 with leaders and staff in each of the entities with a role in school governance (see Appendix B for a sample interview protocol):

- the D.C. Council,
- the District of Columbia Public Schools,
- the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education,
- the Office of the State Superintendent of Education,
- the Public Charter School Board, and
- the State Board of Education.

These interviews included many of the officials who shaped major policy and programmatic decisions under PERAA. A main focus of the interviews was to learn how D.C. officials and staff understood and interpreted their agency's mission and their reasons for making the programmatic choices they made.

The committee was not able to expand its interviews to include teachers, principals, parents, or students. We were able to talk with 3 instructional superintendents, each of whom oversees a cluster of approximately 12 schools. In addition, teachers and parents shared their experiences and perspectives at public meetings held by the committee. Community leaders, advocates, and others interested in public education issues also presented their views during open sessions of the committee's meetings.

Throughout the course of the study, committee members and staff also spoke with staff members in city offices to ask specific questions and request materials, as well as with city residents who have specialized knowledge of the areas we examined. These conversations were not structured interviews; they were generally used to clarify or elaborate a particular topic that the committee was examining.

We are committed to protecting the privacy of everyone who spoke with us. We use information from the interviews to supplement and illuminate the other evidence we present in the report; that information is anonymous but when we present a specific quote or refer to an individual, we describe the individual's general role (e.g., city official, DCPS staff).

### Other Reports and Analyses

The committee also examined relevant research and policy analyses. Although peer-reviewed research specifically on D.C.'s education system was scarce, the committee drew on scholarly literature related to the topics we were examining (e.g., teacher evaluation, mayoral control). In addition, we obtained information from reports prepared by research and policy organizations about specific aspects of education in the District of Columbia (e.g., a report on the adequacy of funding for D.C.'s public schools, an analysis of special education issues in D.C.).

### GUIDE TO THE REPORT

This evaluation is a synthesis of available information about the progress of the schools that covers the years since PERAA was enacted. The structure of the report follows the primary questions we were charged with addressing, which in turn were based on the model for evaluation described in the Phase I report (see Figures 1-1 and 1-2, above).<sup>5</sup> Chapter 2 gives an overview of the context for this evaluation, including a brief discussion of the basic features of the school district as it was when PERAA became law and as it is now and then a detailed discussion of mayoral control as a reform strategy and as it developed in D.C.

Chapters 3 through 6 address the specific questions in our charge: Chapter 3 addresses the questions about structures and roles, discussing the way in which the city carried out the key provisions of PERAA and the current governance structure. Chapter 4 focuses on the strategy DCPS adopted with respect to a key goal, improving human resources, which is also one of the key topics in our charge. Chapter 5 discusses the current conditions for learning across the system, and Chapter 6 discusses outcomes for students. In these chapters, we review specific PERAA goals, assess some of the major actions the agencies have taken, and explore available evidence about how circumstances and outcomes may have changed.

The final chapter pulls this information together to provide answers to basic questions about which efforts seem to be working well 7 years after

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<sup>5</sup>Our charge lists five questions, which are a reframing of the four questions in the evaluation model.

PERAA's adoption and which need additional attention. We offer recommendations with respect to both the progress of the schools under PERAA and the city's ongoing data collection and evaluation needs.

This evaluation addresses all public schools in the District of Columbia, both DCPS and the public charter schools. We discuss data for DCPS and the charter sector whenever it is available, but significantly less information was available about the charter schools and students than those in DCPS. Moreover, the shifting populations of the two sectors made it difficult to compare trend data. Because one of PERAA's major provisions was to create a chancellor for DCPS, it is also possible that DCPS students, schools, and staff have been more directly affected by PERAA than their counterparts in the charter sector. As a result, some of our discussions focus more on DCPS than on charter schools; however, it is important to keep in mind that the students who attend charter schools are an equally important component of the city's education system.

We hope this report will be useful to the city not only for the conclusions we have drawn and the recommendations we make, but also for the context and analysis the committee provides. Reliable evaluation is essential to improvement, and all states and school districts confront similar challenges in finding ways to sustain the needed data collection and analysis. We therefore hope that this report will also be valuable beyond the District of Columbia, to policy makers and others concerned with the challenges of school improvement.



## 2

# Context for School Reform in D.C.

The provisions of the Public Education Reform Amendment Act (PERAA) were designed to respond to serious, long-standing concerns about school quality and student outcomes in a way that fits the unique circumstances in the District of Columbia. To understand what the city chose to do, how the officials charged with implementing the reforms went about it, and the significance of the observations we can make now about what has happened, it is important to understand their context. The Phase I report (National Research Council, 2011) provides a historical overview of D.C.'s public schools and their governance, and the circumstances surrounding the enactment of PERAA. It also discusses the national reform context in which PERAA was designed, as well as first impressions of the initial implementation of the law in D.C.

In this chapter, we discuss the context in which the reforms were implemented. We first look briefly at how the basic characteristics of the students and schools have changed in the years since the law was passed. We then review the marked growth in the number of charter schools and the percentage of public school students enrolling in those schools. The rest of the chapter focuses on the issue of mayoral control of public schools: we consider how this action was expected to improve D.C.'s schools and how this approach has been implemented in some other urban districts. We also examine the challenges of establishing definitively what effects can be attributed to mayoral control and discuss what can be learned about D.C.'s implementation of PERAA from considering those issues.

Chapter 1 and Appendix A describe our efforts to obtain the data needed to present a clear picture of basic trends in the years since PERAA

was enacted. In assembling basic descriptive information about the school system and its students for this chapter we requested data from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), and the Public Charter School Board (PCSB) and searched city websites and other sources. We did not receive or find all the information we had hoped for (see Appendix A), and the data supplied by city agencies was in some cases difficult to reconcile, as we discuss below.

## CHANGES IN THE CITY

### The Students

The city's public schools serve a population that is predominantly black and low-income. D.C.'s overall population has been growing since PERAA was enacted (to 658,893 in 2014),<sup>1</sup> and its racial composition has changed. The population is now less than 50 percent black, down from 60 percent in 2000.<sup>2</sup> The percentages of black students in both DCPS and the charter schools have also decreased, but they remain higher than in the general population. In 2013-2014, 71 percent of DCPS students and 79 percent of charter students were black, compared with 81 and 84 percent, respectively, in 2006-2007.<sup>3</sup>

The city also reports that the public schools are serving an increasingly low-income population: data supplied by OSSE show that between 2006-2007 and 2013-2014 the percentage of all public school students eligible for free and reduced-price lunches increased from 45 percent to 66 percent: see Table 2-1. For DCPS, OSSE reported an increase from 47 to 56 percent, and for the charter schools an increase from 41 to 54 percent. However, the percentages across these years are not comparable because in 2012-2013 the city changed the way eligibility for free and reduced-prices lunches was determined. Under the new definition, in public schools in which 40 percent or more of the student body is defined as at risk,<sup>4</sup> all students are automatically eligible, regardless of family income. Consequently, the number of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches is likely to be much larger, so it is not possible to tell from the OSSE data whether there was an actual increase in students who would be eligible because of low family income.

The committee examined poverty data available from the American Community Survey to see whether the changes reported by the city could

<sup>1</sup>See <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/11000.html> [April 2015].

<sup>2</sup>The city was 70 percent black in 1980.

<sup>3</sup>Data supplied by OSSE. The percentage data available on the DCPS website and supplied by PCSB were different.

<sup>4</sup>Students were defined as at risk if they were, for example, homeless, in foster care, or receiving federal food aid; see <http://feedmoreforless.com/community-eligibility/> [April 2015].

**TABLE 2-1** Characteristics of Students Enrolled in All D.C. Public Schools

Characteristic	2006-2007				2013-2014							
	DCPS	%	Charters	%	Total Across Schools	% Across Schools	DCPS	%	Charters	%	Total	Total %
Students, Number and %	52,632	73	19,388	27	72,020	100	46,393	56	36,564	44	82,957	100
Female	26,713	51	10,193	53	36,906	51	22,975	50	18,865	52	41,840	50
Male	25,921	49	9,197	47	35,118	49	23,418	50	17,688	48	41,106	50
African American	42,835	81	16,285	84	59,120	82	32,884	71	28,801	79	61,685	74
White	8,769	17	2,823	15	11,592	16	10,753	23	5,461	15	16,214	20
Hispanic	5,895	11	2,456	13	8,351	12	7,477	16	5,933	16	15,410	16
Other Race	1,027	2	279	1	1,306	2	2,756	6	2,302	6	5,058	6
English-Language Learners	3,978	8	1,047	5	5,025	7	4,716	10	2,615	7	7,331	9
Special Education Students	7,091	13	2,178	11	9,269	13	6,614	14	4,429	12	11,043	13
Recipients of Free or Reduced-Price Lunches	24,596	47	7,853	41	32,449	45	26,177	56	19,597	54	44,774	55

NOTE: The information in this table does not exactly match the information that is available on the DCPS website (see <http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/About+DCPS/DCPS+Data/DCPS+at+a+Glance> [June 2015]) and the Public Charter Schools Board website (see <http://focusdc.org/data> [June 2015]). SOURCE: Information provided by Office of the State Superintendent of Education and available at <http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/SY13-14%20Enrollment%20Audit%20Overview%20%282.26.2014%29%5B1%5D.pdf> [February 2015].

be corroborated. The data in Table 2-2 show that, overall, the percentages of children living at the poverty level or below 185 percent of the poverty level have stayed fairly stable over the past 14 years. The percentage of children living in or near poverty in Wards 7 and 8 has fluctuated more and was larger in 2014 than in 2000. However, this increase is not large enough to explain the differences in the percentage of low-income students reported by OSSE.

Nevertheless, the public schools serve many low-income families, and economic and other disadvantages are not evenly distributed in the city. As city residents know, D.C. has eight wards, which are political districts that each elect a representative to the D.C. Council: see Figure 2-1. The wards are comparable in population but vary in their economic and racial characteristics.

Tables 2-3 and 2-4 summarize data showing some of the differences across the wards. For example, the poverty rate in Ward 8 is 36 percent, and 49 percent of its children live in poverty. In Ward 3, the poverty rate is 7.9 percent, and 1.9 percent of its children live in poverty. Wards 5, 7, and 8 have the highest percentages of black residents, while Ward 3 has the lowest. Wards 7 and 8 also have the highest percentages of children in their overall populations, 24 and 30 percent, respectively, as compared with 4.8 percent in Ward 2 and 13 percent in Ward 3, for example.<sup>5</sup> A 2011 analysis of risk factors for children by ward showed the greatest risks in Wards 5, 7, and 8 (Child Trends, 2011). D.C.'s persistently wide achievement gaps are likely the result of interactions among race, poverty, and disparities in school quality across the city, an issue we discuss in other chapters (DC Action for Children, 2012; see also chapters in Duncan and Murnane, 2011).

### The Schools and School Enrollment

Obtaining a definitive number of public schools in the city was not straightforward because agencies use different means of counting schools.<sup>6</sup> Table 2-5 presents school counts from the website of Neighborhood DC, a project of the Urban Institute and Washington DC Local Initiatives Support Corporation; these counts do not precisely match the counts posted on the DCPS and PCSB websites.

Approximately 83,000 students were enrolled in DCPS and public charter schools in 2013-2014. Figure 2-2 summarizes trends between 2001

<sup>5</sup>See [http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/wards/Nbr\\_prof\\_wrde1.html](http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/wards/Nbr_prof_wrde1.html) [March 2015].

<sup>6</sup>In response to our requests, OSSE provided a list of DCPS and charter schools that serve each grade level. Different schools serve different and multiple grade levels, and these data did not include a total number of individual schools in each sector or in the city. The DCPS and PCSB websites each post a count of actual schools in their respective sectors, by type.

**TABLE 2-2** Percentage of Children Classified as Living in or Near Poverty in the District of Columbia

Year	In Poverty			At or Below 185% of the Poverty Level		
	All Children Ages 5-18	Public/Charter Ages 5-18	Wards 7-8 Public/Charter Ages 5-18	All Children Ages 5-18	Public/Charter Ages 5-18	Wards 7-8 Public/Charter Ages 5-18
2000	35.0	36.9	42.8	53.0	57.2	64.1
2001	32.0	37.3		54.9	62.4	
2002	28.3	32.1		51.9	58.4	
2003	36.8	41.8		53.1	60.6	
2004	35.6	38.2		53.3	58.3	
2005	31.5	36.0	43.7	53.1	59.1	70.4
2006	37.9	40.2	43.3	55.7	61.8	76.0
2007	28.0	29.2	35.0	46.2	49.2	57.6
2008	33.5	33.1	40.3	51.7	54.5	68.5
2009	38.0	36.9	45.2	52.7	52.9	64.9
2010	39.1	36.5	49.3	58.0	59.4	72.9
2011	36.1	34.9	51.9	48.6	49.6	66.9
2012	35.5	33.1	54.6	52.8	53.4	67.6
2013	38.5	35.5	48.2	54.6	56.7	69.6

SOURCE: Values calculated using microdata available at the website for the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, see <http://usa.ipums.org> [April 2015].

and 2014. A historical analysis shows that enrollment in the city's public schools began declining in 1969 and decreased in most years from then until 2010.<sup>7</sup> That analysis also shows that total public school enrollment had declined to 70,919 in 2008-2009 (after PERAA) but has grown since then. The growth is primarily accounted for by the charter schools. According to information provided by OSSE (see Table 2-1, above) enrollment in public charters grew from 19,390 in 2006-2007 to 36,564 in 2013-2014. Enrollment in DCPS continued a multiyear decline between 2006-2007 and 2009-2010, but it has stabilized since then and was 46,393 in 2013-2014.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup>See <https://data.dcpsb.org/dataset/Charter-And-DCPS-Enrollment-1967-To-Present/i4w3-evki> [April 2015].

<sup>8</sup>As another comparison for context, private school enrollment declined between 2008 and 2010, from 15,789 to 13,170. See [https://www.census.gov/hhes/school/files/ewert\\_private\\_school\\_enrollment.pdf](https://www.census.gov/hhes/school/files/ewert_private_school_enrollment.pdf) [March 2015]. We could not locate more recent data.

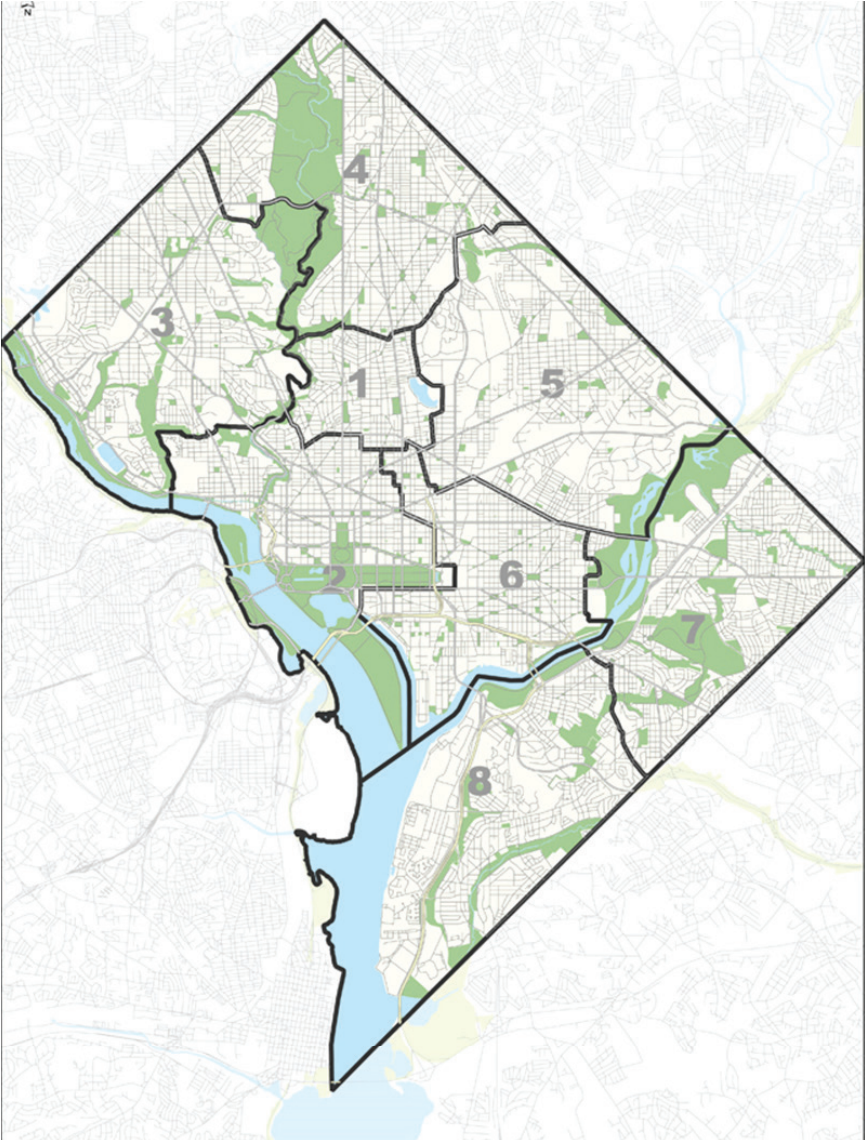


FIGURE 2-1 Ward map.

SOURCE: Mollenbeck (2014). Reprinted with permission from Andrew Mollenbeck/WTOP.

**TABLE 2-3** Percentage of Population and Race and Ethnicity by Ward, 2010

Ward	Total Population	Black Non-Hispanic	White Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Asian
1	74,462	33.0	40.0	21.0	5.0
2	76,883	9.8	70.0	9.5	10.0
3	78,887	5.6	78.0	7.5	8.2
4	75,773	59.0	20.0	19.0	2.0
5	74,308	77.0	15.0	6.3	1.7
6	76,000	43.0	47.0	4.8	5.1
7	71,748	95.0	1.5	2.7	0.3
8	73,662	94.0	3.2	1.8	0.5

SOURCE: Data from website of Neighborhood DC, a project of the Urban Institute and Washington DC Local Initiatives Support Corporation; see [http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/wards/Nbr\\_prof\\_wrde1.html](http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/wards/Nbr_prof_wrde1.html) [March 2015].

**TABLE 2-4** Social and Economic Characteristics of D.C.'s Eight Wards

Ward	Poverty Rate/% of Children in Poverty (2007-2011)	Average Family Income (2007-2011)	Violent/Property Crimes per 1,000 People (2011)	% Unemployment (2007-2011)	% of Persons Without HS Diploma (2007-2011)
1	15.0 ± 1.5 22.0 ± 13.0	\$99,428 ± 9,338	14.0/50.0	7.2 ± 3.6	16.0 ± 4.1
2	15.0 ± 1.5 8.5 ± 35.0	\$222,345 ± 27,879	9.4/67.0	3.9 ± 4.1	6.3 ± 5.2
3	7.9 ± 1.0 1.9 ± 14.0	\$240,044 ± 17,393	1.5/21.0	3.5 ± 4.0	2.9 ± 4.8
4	12.0 ± 1.6 15.0 ± 8.8	\$115,482 ± 8,206	7.5/30.0	11.0 ± 4.5	16.0 ± 4.7
5	20.0 ± 9.6 26.0 ± 9.6	\$79,153 ± 6,850	13.0/46.0	15.0 ± 4.1	18.0 ± 4.5
6	16.0 27.0 ± 14.0	\$129,674 ± 9,983	12.0/49.0	7.5 ± 4.1	10.0 ± 4.4
7	26.0 ± 2.5 41.0 ± 6.5	\$57,387 ± 4,757	17.0/42.0	19.0 ± 6.5	17.0 ± 5.3
8	36.0 ± 2.7 49.0 ± 4.3	\$43,255 ± 3,558	19.0/38.0	22.0 ± 6.4	19.0 ± 5.3

NOTE: Source used ± to indicate range of certainty about the data.

SOURCE: Data from website of Neighborhood DC, a project of the Urban Institute and Washington DC Local Initiatives Support Corporation; see [http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/wards/Nbr\\_prof\\_wrde1.html](http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/wards/Nbr_prof_wrde1.html) [March 2015].

TABLE 2-5 Schools in Each Ward, 2013

Ward	All	DCPS	Public Charter
1	31	11	20
2	10	8	2
3	10	10	0
4	34	15	19
5	36	16	20
6	33	18	15
7	33	16	17
8	41	19	22
All	228	113	115

SOURCE: Data from website of Neighborhood DC, a project of the Urban Institute and Washington DC Local Initiatives Support Corporation; see <http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/wards/wards.html> [April 2015].

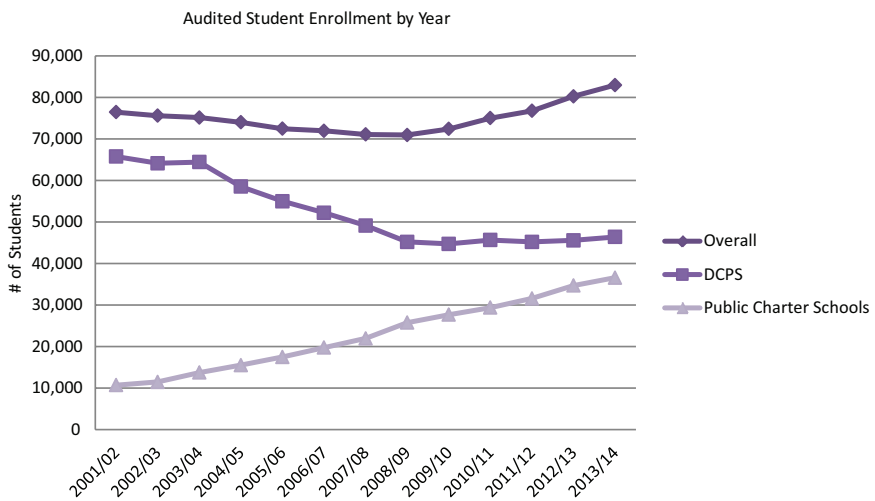


FIGURE 2-2 Public school enrollment trends in the District of Columbia, 2001-2014.  
SOURCE: Data from Office of the State Superintendent of Education (2014e).

### Growth of the Charter Sector

In giving the mayor direct control of the public schools, PERAA implicitly included the public charter schools in that charge (D.C. Official Code § 38-191), and the law’s designers expected that the charter sector would grow. In 2005-2006, charter schools served just over 20 percent of students, and was predicted that the percentage would grow to 35 percent by 2015-2016 (Parthenon Group, 2006). Yet by 2014, the percentage was 44 percent. PCSB reports that there are approximately 100 individual charter schools, governed by 61 chartering organizations, which function as school districts, or local education agencies (LEAs).<sup>9</sup> D.C. has one of the largest percentages of a city’s students enrolled in charters nationwide, and D.C. is viewed as a leader by proponents of charter schools.<sup>10</sup>

The first charter schools opened in D.C. after the District of Columbia School Reform Act of 1995 (an act of Congress), which defined charters as public schools (P.L. 38-1802.01). This law also specified that public charter schools be exempt from “statutes, policies, rules, and regulations established for the District of Columbia public schools by the superintendent, Board of Education, Mayor, District of Columbia Council, or Authority” (P.L. 38-1802.04(c)(3)(B)).

We discuss what PERAA indicated about the governance and oversight of these schools in Chapter 3, but note here that the charter landscape in D.C. has evolved since PERAA was written and enacted. When the city’s first charter schools opened, they were comparatively small in scale and few in number, with many intended to serve particular needs (Henig et al., 1999). Today, not only are nearly half of D.C.’s public school students enrolled in charter schools, but many of the charter LEAs are management organizations with ties outside the city, such as Friendship Public Charter School (6 D.C. campuses; 2 in other jurisdictions); Imagine Schools (2 D.C. campuses; 71 nationwide); and KIPP (15 D.C. campuses; 162 nationwide). Several of the charter LEAs are run by for-profit companies (Brown, 2014a).<sup>11</sup>

The growth of the charter sector has significantly altered the challenge of governing D.C.’s public schools, and the school system today is different from the one for which PERAA was designed. The role of charter schools

<sup>9</sup>Charters are granted to LEAs, some of which encompass multiple school campuses.

<sup>10</sup>For example, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools rated D.C. 10th of 43 states; see <http://www.publiccharters.org/get-the-facts/law-database/states/DC/> [January 2015]. Friends of Choice in Urban Schools describes the Act establishing charters in D.C. as “one of the strongest charter school laws in the United States.” See <http://focusdc.org/school-reform-act> [January 2015].

<sup>11</sup>The companies are Imagine Schools, Inc., Academica, Community Action Partners, and Basis Educational Group (Brown, 2014a).

in public education has sometimes been controversial. Our committee takes no position in favor of or opposed to charter schools, but we do consider questions about governance and accountability for the students enrolled in charters as a key aspect of our evaluation. As some scholars have observed, a primary consideration in legislation to support or expand charter schools is the degree of flexibility given to charters and the degree of accountability to government expected from charter schools (Henig, 2013, p. 137 and authors cited there). Whether managed by a for-profit enterprise or not, whether a “mom and pop” operation or part of a national network, a charter school is a public school. Charter schools are funded with taxpayer dollars and they exist to serve the educational needs of a jurisdiction’s students.

Thus, it is important to consider how education leaders satisfy themselves and city residents that a full range of educational opportunities is available to all students in both charter and traditional schools.

### THE PERAA REFORMS

The most prominent image of PERAA and education reform in Washington, D.C., over the past 7 years has been as a city where the mayor has direct authority over the public schools. The committee wanted to understand the change to mayoral control in the contexts both of the national menu of reform strategies and of the unique historical and political circumstances in the nation’s capital. We commissioned a paper to explore the ways mayoral control is intended to work, the challenges in identifying the effects of this reform, and some comparisons with other cities—ones that have and have not adopted mayoral control (Henig, 2014). We draw on that paper and other research relevant to this topic to discuss the context of the PERAA reforms.

#### Mayoral Control as an Education Reform Strategy

Mayoral control is essentially a governance reform that shifts how responsibility and authority for the public schools are structured. Although the specifics vary from city to city, the overall effect is to move policy decisions about schools from single-purpose governance, overseen by an elected school board, to inclusion within the city government led by the mayor. Proponents of mayoral control typically offer four basic rationales for what it can accomplish. The first rationale stems from frustration with the chronic poor performance of urban schools: a need “to do something” and a belief that vesting decision-making authority in one elected official is a more promising option than the status quo of governance by amateurs

on an often divided school board.<sup>12</sup> A second, related rationale is that when the schools are better incorporated into city government, there will be greater coordination across youth-serving agencies, including those responsible for children's health and welfare, youth employment, after-school activities, and cultural opportunities.

A third rationale cited by proponents of mayoral control is that a school district, as a single-purpose agency, is isolated not only from other government agencies, but also from private-sector groups and institutions. Research on urban school reform in 11 major U.S. cities, including the District of Columbia, has shown that its effectiveness depends on the schools being able to forge ongoing relationships with disparate groups, ranging from business elites and labor unions to grassroots community activists, and to draw on broader civic capacity (the ability of different sectors of the community to work together to solve problems) (Stone et al., 2001). Mayors may be in a better position than school boards to mobilize civic capacity on behalf of the schools because their own electoral and governing coalitions are broad and cross multiple sectors.

The fourth rationale that proponents of mayoral control offer is that it increases democratic accountability for schools' performance. Instead of holding school boards to account in low-turnout elections, voters can hold the mayor, a high-visibility public figure, accountable (Wong and Shen, 2013).<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, because every mayor's constituencies cross sectors, the scope of political debate is broad and more voices with opinions about the schools are likely to be considered.

Critics of mayoral control point to the distance between city hall and the world of individual schools and classrooms: they argue that centralizing authority in a mayor's office makes education governance less democratic because in practice the public has fewer outlets for expressing its concerns than it does under a multimember school board (especially one elected by wards or subdistricts). They also argue that decision making is often less transparent as a result because authority and influence are concentrated in a single executive. Analysts also note that the goals of mayoral control may not always relate to improved educational performance, and in some instances have primarily focused on resolving financial problems or altering labor-management relations. Similarly, changing the governance structure to encompass a larger constituency does not necessarily ensure more competent school leadership (Meier, 2004). As we found in our interviews and

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<sup>12</sup> Henig and Fraser (2009) characterize this rationale as a push factor, describing the movement toward mayoral control as the latest in a series of reforms motivated by the belief that any change would have to bring improvement.

<sup>13</sup> In contrast, critics have argued that mayoral control blurs democratic accountability because it is difficult to determine whether voters, in judging mayoral performance at election time, are considering their records on schools or on other policy areas (Gold et al., 2011).

public forums, perceptions about whether mayoral control makes governance more or less democratic and competent vary significantly. Opinions on this question may depend in part on how an observer views the value of administration by experts, as compared with a perhaps less efficient but more democratic model in which the public participates more actively in decision making.

Whether the rationale for mayoral control rests on arguments about greater coordination, civic capacity-building, resources, or accountability, proponents expect that a change in governance at the top of the system will result in enhanced learning opportunities and outcomes for students. The logic is that a school system will be “jolted” through new institutional rules and structures. These new structures will affect patterns of influence over policy decisions and in turn, the distribution of resources, the recruitment and management of personnel, and choices about school organization and curriculum. Together, these changes will then lead to a fundamental shift in how educators teach and students learn.

For a number of reasons, a positive relationship between governance changes and improved student outcomes is by no means assured. As a governance reform, mayoral control may be implemented differently over time and place, depending on the leaders who implement it and the choices they make with regard to personnel, curriculum, and other student supports. A change in governance structures does not deliver educational results on its own; it requires an infrastructure through which policy decisions can be translated into school and classroom practice (Cohen and Moffitt, 2009). That infrastructure is shaped not just by the person a mayor chooses to lead the day-to-day operations of the school system, but also by how much attention a mayor chooses to devote to the schools and how he or she interacts with the city council that typically shares budgetary authority over city agencies. In addition, even a major jolt such as mayoral control is not introduced in an institutional or programmatic void. Some policies and basic structures, such as the number of schools, how they are organized, and what they teach, will persist at least in the short term, and these features may be quite resistant to change. Consequently, the result may be a hybrid system with newer mayoral priorities layered onto traditional elements (Henig, 2013).

Further complicating the relationship between governance and student outcomes is that mayoral control has most recently represented one strategy among several on the national agenda, or, as Henig characterizes it, “one arrow in a quiver of . . . reform ideas” (Henig, 2013, p. 14). Consequently, it has generally been implemented at the same time that other reforms, such as school choice and standards-based assessment and accountability, are also under way. For example, New York City is well known for having implemented other reforms at the same time its mayor was given control

over the public schools. Yet cities vary significantly in their approaches. Not all mayoral control school systems have adopted reforms such as those in New York City. Several cities—including Jackson, Mississippi; New Haven, Connecticut; Boston, Massachusetts; and Trenton, New Jersey—have long operated under mayoral control, but only New Haven’s recent programmatic choices include reform strategies such as contracting with a diverse group of providers (portfolio management) to manage low-performing schools. Yet New Haven has also forged a collaborative model of school district and union interaction, in contrast to more contentious strategies that have characterized some mayoral control cities, such as Chicago and New York.

Other cities that do not have mayoral control have also pursued reform agendas. Some, including Denver, Colorado, and Los Angeles, California, have adopted policies (e.g., charter school expansion and the use of student test scores in evaluating teachers) that are currently prominent on the national reform agenda. In contrast, other non-mayoral control cities, such as Long Beach, California, and Aldine, Texas, have improved educational outcomes for their low-income students by focusing on locally developed curricular and instructional strategies rather than adopting more radical personnel and management reforms (Kirp, 2013).

These examples illustrate the difficulty of disentangling the effects of governance models from the programmatic choices made by city and school leaders. The task is particularly challenging in those cities that adopted mayoral control over the past two decades and implemented other reforms at the same time. When these things happen simultaneously, it is impossible to clearly determine the relative contribution of governance structures or particular policies and practices to student outcomes observed several years later.

Another factor that makes it difficult to attribute outcomes to mayoral control is the fact that reform under mayoral control is not a static process. The relationship between governance and student outcomes may change as new mayors are elected who have different policy priorities. Only a few cities have moved into the second and third generation of mayoral control, so there is very little systematic knowledge about change over time. However, Chicago, Boston, and Cleveland, which have seen significant continuity in policy direction through several mayors, are useful examples. In particular, Cleveland, with its third-generation mayor, exemplifies a relatively stable approach to governance and school reform. In these three cities—as in D.C.—the current mayors have generally continued the policy strategies and styles (whether incremental or more dramatic) of their predecessors. The election of Bill de Blasio in New York City presents a contrast because his policy preferences with regard to the schools differ sharply from those of his predecessor, Michael Bloomberg. Although it is too soon

to predict with any certainty, it may be that his administration will demonstrate that as a governance model, mayoral control can be adapted to a wide range of political styles and policy agendas.

In addition, the match between leadership style and policy choices may change as the governance reform matures and evolves in a local context. For example, a mayor who takes over the schools with the goal of comprehensive change in the form of market reforms, greater performance accountability, and increased reliance on data-driven decisions, may prefer a school leader who moves quickly, depends on expert counsel, and assumes a combative or distant stance toward those opposed to specific changes. However, in another context or where the policies and processes associated with the initial “jolt” are already in place, a mayor may decide that a different style will be more effective. In these cases, the mayoral style may look more like those of the late Thomas Menino in Boston, Massachusetts, or Brian Stack in Union City, New Jersey. Both of these leaders have been characterized as pragmatic politicians who focused on problem solving; were able to negotiate and compromise in building support coalitions; were willing to commit to a slow, incremental process; and were supportive of the school leaders they selected (Portz, 2004; Kirp, 2013).

The number of cases is still too few to draw any solid generalizations about the match between leadership styles and local context or timing. Nevertheless, multiple studies of political leadership support the idea that different times and circumstances require different kinds of leaders (e.g., Jones, 1989; Skowronek, 1993; Bennis and Thomas, 2002; Greenstein, 2004).

This brief overview of mayoral control as one component of a national reform agenda suggests three implications for assessing this policy in the D.C. context:

- Mayoral control may operate in very different ways, depending on the civic and school leaders who execute it, the programmatic choices they make, and how they structure the implementation process.
- These factors, along with the organizational distance between city hall and individual classrooms, make it difficult to identify a causal relationship between governance changes and student outcomes.
- Mayoral control may operate quite differently over time as it matures: new leaders arrive with different policy preferences and styles and both the city and the school system will learn from their mistakes and adapt to new circumstances.

### Mayoral Control in the District of Columbia

As PERAA and the move to mayoral control have been implemented, D.C.'s progress is often compared to progress in Chicago and New York, which have adopted similar governance changes and reform agendas. Although such comparisons are to some extent valid, it is important to keep in mind that each city's political context and history shape its outcomes. In enacting the shift from a half elected and half mayor-appointed school board, D.C. lawmakers were continuing a long tradition of turning to governance changes as a strategy for remedying the shortcomings of the school system. Since 1804, the system has operated under 17 governance and administrative structures. Most of the changes in the 20th century were prompted by the publication of reports documenting the public schools' failure to educate the city's students.

For 70 years, these reports from a variety of civic organizations, along with media accounts and congressional hearings, pointed to several factors as responsible for unequal learning opportunities and chronic low student achievement: incompetent management and lack of fiscal oversight, unequal and inefficient distribution of resources to schools, and a political history of racially divided neighborhoods and wards (for a summary of this history, see National Research Council, 2011, Ch. 3).

A number of factors help explain the city's continuing reliance on governance changes as a remedy to the schools' problems, but a prominent one has been its unique jurisdictional status. Although the City of Washington had several elected mayors between 1802 and 1871, D.C. elected its first 20th century mayor in 1975. In addition, D.C.'s unique status as a city and a quasi-state for the purposes of federal grant programs has meant that it is responsible for the duties of a local school district as well as those of a state agency.

Congress has the authority to overturn laws passed by the D.C. Council, and D.C. does not have voting representatives to the House of Representatives or the Senate, and D.C. residents have long felt disenfranchised by this situation. Consequently, the introduction of a partly elected school board in 1968 and the Home Rule Act of 1973 were opportunities to design structures that could ensure greater political representation and accountability (e.g., through ward-based elections). Each of the changes made since then has reflected the tradeoffs between administrative operations that promote efficiency and institutions and processes that allow citizen voices to be heard and seriously considered in decision making.

The city conducted an extensive background review before enacting PERAA. Between January 5, 2007, when the draft PERAA legislation was introduced by then-city council chair Vincent Gray at the request of Mayor Adrian Fenty, and its passage 3 months later by a vote of 9-2, the council

held seven hearings that included nearly 60 hours of testimony from local officials and community activists, as well as national education leaders and researchers. A report that summarized this background review (Council of the District of Columbia Committee of the Whole, 2007) suggests that the council members were well aware of the limitations of what could be expected from the governance changes embodied in it:<sup>14</sup>

As history reveals and expert witnesses testified to, there is nothing inherent in a particular governance structure directly related to improved student academic achievement (p. 10) . . . Mayoral control is not a panacea (p. 11). . . . Mayor Fenty's proposed mayoral takeover is just that—a proposal for a governance change. It was not intended to contain specifics pertaining to academic reform (p. 12).

The council report reviews the experience of other school districts that had already implemented mayoral control. It summarizes reports of academic progress made under these arrangements, but it also notes criticisms of the validity of the evidence and indicates that a number of other cities with mayoral involvement but not control had experienced significant academic improvement. It identifies, in the available research on mayoral control, various advantages, including better working relationships between the schools and other government agencies and the ability of a mayor to mobilize a broad constituency and expand institutional commitment to the schools. The report implicitly suggests that these changes can lead to greater parental involvement, strengthened accountability, and expanded managerial capacity—resources that can be used in addressing issues of student performance and parental satisfaction.

At the same time, the report also cites research arguing that the abolition of elected school boards has sometimes reduced democratic decision making, which has disproportionately affected minority communities. The report's authors note that they are sensitive to the fact that the board of education was the first elected body in the District of Columbia since the 19th century. Consequently, PERAA included additional provisions in the legislation to ensure that the new State Board of Education (SBOE) would not just be an advisory board, but would have policy authority with regard to state standards and accountability plans and the certification and accreditation of teacher preparation programs. Despite acknowledging the

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<sup>14</sup>The 2007 report of the council's "Committee of the Whole," describes the proposed law and provides supporting analysis. In articulating reasons for supporting the move to mayoral control, the report's authors drew heavily on a study of the public schools prepared by the Parthenon Group (2006) (see the Phase I report, National Research Council, 2011), which made recommendations for improvement.

limitations and potential pitfalls of mayoral control, the report concluded (Council of the District of Columbia Committee of the Whole, 2007):

the Committee is unwilling and District residents cannot afford to continue accepting the status quo. Bill 17-0001 [PERAA] provides for a change in the governance structure of DCPS that best suits the District of Columbia allowing for student academic achievement and improvement in the overall well being of every child (p. 15).

The council's reasoning seems to parallel the motivations in other cities that moved to mayoral control because of frustration with the status quo. The report notes that the D.C. system was in a "state of emergency" because of two decades of underperformance, its complexity and lack of accountability, and the need to accelerate the system's capacity to improve student achievement. The report concluded that "Bill 17-0001 proposes to address all of these conditions" (p. 10).

As in other cities, the change to mayoral control in D.C. established new structures, such as the OSSE (a much expanded version of the former State Education Office) and the SBOE. But it also gave new authority to an existing institution, the PCSB, which was established by Congress in 1995. PERAA transferred to the PCSB authority over the 18 charter schools that had been authorized by the local board of education that PERAA abolished. At the same time, the legislation broadened the PCSB's basis of authority by specifying poor academic performance as grounds for charter revocation and requiring performance reviews of charter schools every 3 years instead of every 5 years.

The treatment of charter schools in PERAA is an example of a mayoral control statute authorizing a major change in governance while also maintaining a key institution whose rules advance a particular type of school system. In allowing for a growing charter sector and increasing the PCSB's authority, city officials were acknowledging the context in which mayoral control was being implemented, and they were ensuring that this approach to school organization—although controversial among some groups in the city—would persist.

In allowing the PCSB to continue, the D.C. Council was implicitly endorsing the presence of charter schools as a reform strategy. This decision can be considered a unique aspect of PERAA because the other institutions the law established are essentially neutral with regard to the substantive policies that can be adopted and implemented through them. Mayor Fenty had provided a general outline of his draft academic action plan in his testimony before the council (Fenty, 2007b), but the law itself does not address the strategies and approaches Fenty described. PERAA deals only with institutional structures and rules for how the public schools are to be

governed, not the programmatic substance of education reform (see Chapter 3 for a summary of PERAA's major provisions). In giving the mayor increased authority, the legislation sets up a framework through which each mayor and his or her appointed leaders could adopt and implement their chosen approaches to personnel management, school organization, and classroom instruction.

The specific strategies that Fenty and the chancellor he appointed, Michelle Rhee, chose were prominent on the national reform agenda: an emphasis on improving human capital using recruitment, evaluation, and compensation of educators; data-driven decision making; more uniform standards across schools; and greater school-level accountability through the use of student testing and other indicators. PERAA allows new leaders the possibility of enacting a fundamentally different policy agenda. Even though a new mayor, Vincent Gray, was elected in 2011, most commentators note that despite changes in leadership styles, the policy agenda and basic approach to managing public schools in D.C. have not changed significantly.<sup>15</sup> Yet even with similar policy preferences, new leaders with different styles can shape the tenor and speed of implementation; how the concerns and interests of educators, parents, and the public are reflected in decision making; and the extent to which policies are altered in response to changing conditions.

A valid assessment of the effects of mayoral control requires that the new structures it authorizes, the policies adopted through those structures, and the manner in which they are implemented each be considered as separate factors that may shape any changes in school quality and student learning. In the case of the District of Columbia, these elements of structure, policy, and leadership are further complicated by its legacy of limited payoffs from a long history of governance reforms and its unique status as the nation's capital: a city that has some state-level functions and responsibilities but one that is also subject to congressional control.

The legislative record of PERAA suggests that the potential benefits and possible pitfalls of mayoral control as they might apply in the D.C. context were well understood by its sponsors. Those realistic expectations were reflected in the requirement that there be an independent 5-year evaluation of the progress made under the new structures.

In the next chapter, as part of that evaluation, we describe how the institutions authorized in PERAA have been implemented and modified since 2007. Subsequent chapters examine continuity and change in the major policies and programs that have defined the D.C. public school reform agenda over two generations of mayoral control.

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<sup>15</sup>The current mayor, Muriel Bowser, who took office at the beginning of 2015, has indicated that she does not intend to radically change the approach that has been established—for example, she retained the chancellor—but it is too soon to assess her approach to public education.

### 3

## Coordination, Efficiency, and Lines of Authority

The designers of the Public Education Reform Amendment Act (PERAA) were responding to a critique that the city’s “complex public education system . . . lacks accountability and has hindered reform efforts” (Council of the District of Columbia Committee of the Whole, 2007, p. 9; see Chapter 2). In addition to giving control of the public schools to the mayor, the law called for the creation of new entities to govern and administer the public schools, changes in lines of authority, and improved coordination among city offices. The first two questions in the charge to our committee were whether the structures and roles outlined in PERAA were implemented as intended and whether they improved coordination and efficiency and established clearer lines of authority.

To answer these questions we reviewed the requirements of PERAA and analyzed the city’s major actions. In this chapter we first provide an overview of the city’s response to PERAA’s requirements and then discuss the functioning of the education agencies covered by the law. We next turn to analysis of the ways in which the agencies work together and our questions about the lines of authority. We also consider three issues that we judged to be important gauges of progress toward PERAA’s goals: data collection and access, the transparency of the budgeting process, and public engagement. Our overall conclusions are presented at the end of the chapter.

To explore these questions, we reviewed the provisions of the full text of PERAA and subsequent relevant amendments (see Appendix C);<sup>1</sup> materials publicly available from the city, including documentation of goals, strategies, programs, and outcomes produced by the offices responsible for public education; performance and budget reports each agency is required to prepare; and materials and information about the agencies' work supplied on request by agency officials. To understand how city leaders interpreted and acted on the provisions of PERAA, we also conducted structured interviews with city officials and employees in leadership roles in each of the education agencies and the D.C. Council. We asked these leaders to discuss the reasoning behind their policy decisions, their understanding of the governance structure as it currently functions, and their perceptions of the city's responses to PERAA. These interviews were vital to the committee because there were no other possible sources for the direct observations of leaders who have been responsible for governing the public schools.

We also interviewed local experts on the D.C. education system and other specific topics, such as budget processes.<sup>2</sup> These interviews, as well as additional conversations with lower-level agency staff members, helped us to understand complex procedures. We also used analyses of circumstances in D.C. carried out by independent researchers and advocacy groups as other sources of external views about agencies' functioning. We used news coverage of developments related to the agencies' functioning to check factual information about actions by agencies and the D.C. Council and other developments.

Our findings and conclusions are about the structure and functioning of city agencies and processes; we did not evaluate the performance of current or past city officials. All of the city officials whom we interviewed were hired after the passage of PERAA.

### MEETING THE REQUIREMENTS OF PERAA

*The basic structures described in PERAA are largely in place, though some of the structures have changed over time. The interagency coordination body that was called for is not in place. The requirement to have an ombudsman was initially met but the office was defunded, and then re-established in 2014 by the D.C. Council.*

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<sup>1</sup>A summary of PERAA is available at <http://www.dcwatch.com/council17/17-001b.htm#I%20Sec.%20102> [January 2015]. However, we conducted a Lexis Nexis search to obtain the complete text of the original law and subsequent relevant amendments. A document showing the full text and these changes is Appendix C, which is available at <http://www.nap.edu/>.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter 1 for a summary of the interview process and Appendix B for a sample interview protocol.

The key provisions of PERAA are shown in Box 3-1. Some PERAA provisions were revised by subsequent legislative or other actions: see Appendix C.

PERAA's primary focus was on five agencies that together would govern and operate the public schools. Two already existed: DCPS, the agency that had been responsible for all city public schools before charter schools

### **BOX 3-1 Key Provisions of PERAA**

The Public Education Reform Amendment Act (PERAA) included a number of significant provisions:

- It established a Department of Education, led by a Deputy Mayor for Education.
- It redesigned the State Education Office, converting the position of State Education Officer to State Superintendent of Education.
- It converted the position of D.C. school superintendent to D.C. chancellor, now appointed by the mayor with the advice and consent of the City Council, and it granted the chancellor responsibility for the overall operations of the public school system.
- It tasked the new Department of Education with various planning, promotion, coordination, and supervision duties, along with oversight of the Office of the State Superintendent of Education and the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization.
- It established the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education to provide parents and residents an entity to which they could express their concerns.
- It created the Interagency Collaboration and Services Integration Commission to coordinate the services of all agencies that serve children and youth.
- It significantly altered the duties and authority of the former Board of Education, which was renamed the State Board of Education, and removed it from the local, day-to-day operation of the school system. The new board was established as fully elected, as opposed to partly appointed.
- It established the Public Charter School Board as the sole chartering entity in the District of Columbia (though other chartering entities could be allowed).
- It mandated a 5-year independent evaluation to determine, among other things, whether sufficient progress in public education has been achieved to warrant continuation of the provisions and requirements of PERAA or whether a new law and a new system of education should be enacted.

NOTE: This summary was taken from a city website in 2011. See Appendix C for a compilation of the original law and changes to it since 2007, as of the writing of this report.

SOURCE: National Research Council (2011, p. 43).

were introduced in 1995, and the Public Charter School Board (PCSB), which was created to oversee the charter schools. A key change was to give the mayor direct control over DCPS. The other three agencies were new: the Deputy Mayor of Education (DME), a new State Board of Education (SBOE) to replace the former Board of Education, and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), which was to take over the state functions formerly carried out by the old Board of Education.

The first question in the charge to the committee was whether the primary provisions of PERAA were implemented and working as planned. We focus first on the structural responses to PERAA's provisions before turning to an analysis of the agencies' functioning. Figure 3-1 shows the basic governance structures before and immediately after PERAA. Table 3-1 shows the chronology of some of the key events in public school reform in the city, including the creation of new entities in response to PERAA. As Figure 3-1 illustrates, the basic structures described in PERAA are largely in place though there have been some changes since the law was first implemented.<sup>3</sup> One structure that has changed is the office of the ombudsman, which was established, defunded, and then reestablished in 2014. A significant gap in the implementation of PERAA is the interagency coordination entity specified in PERAA.

### Interagency Coordination Body

Over many years, D.C. has seen a number of attempts at establishing better coordination among agencies (see, e.g., Keegan and Chaplin, 2002), but none of them has been sustained. To address this problem, PERAA called for the formation of a structure that would coordinate across the city agencies responsible for education, health, mental health, social services, and juvenile justice. The Deputy Mayor for Education was given the responsibility of overseeing the structure, and the Interagency Collaboration and Services Integration Commission (ICSIC) was created to meet this requirement.<sup>4</sup> However, this structure no longer exists.

ICSIC operated for approximately 2 years. Consistent with its charge, ICSIC held meetings and initiated pilot programs: see National Research Council (2011) for some of the accomplishments of ICSIC's first 2 years and its plans for pursuing the other PERAA goals. According to a former ICSIC member, the commission was viewed as a significant improvement

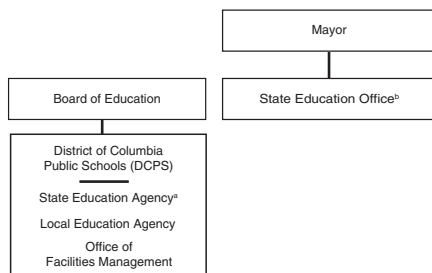
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<sup>3</sup>See Table D-1 in Appendix D for a description of the current responsibilities of the D.C. education agencies and what has changed since PERAA.

<sup>4</sup>The guidelines for the functioning of the structure to be created reflected the emerging literature on how to help prevent duplication of effort and initiatives that work at cross purposes, as well as make sure the needs of vulnerable children and youth are met (see, e.g., Clay, 2009; Comey et al., 2009; Rennie Center, 2009; Chang, 2011; Herz et al., 2012; Scott et al., 2014).

D.C. Public Schools Governance Structure, prior to the 2007 Reform Act and after the Reform Act

Before the Reform Act of 2007



After the Reform Act of 2007

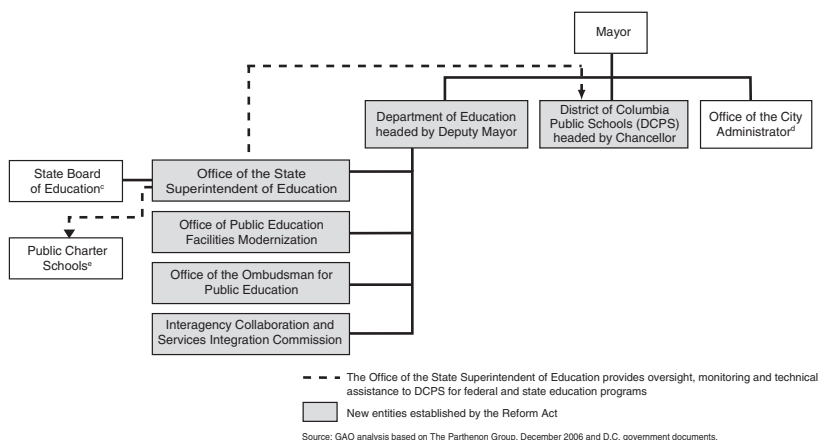


FIGURE 3-1 Education governance structure before and immediately after PERAA. SOURCE: U.S. Government Accountability Office (2009, p. 7).

over prior coordination efforts because the department heads and the mayor were involved, and the members were energetic and enthusiastic. In 2010, however, ICSIC was dissolved, and a Statewide Commission on Children, Youth, and Families was established, but it, too, was subsequently discontinued.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>This is an instance in which an agency website has misleading or old information. The DME website lists this commission as an active program, but the contact person is no longer employed by the city and no other information is provided. See <http://dme.dc.gov/page/charter-school-resource-center> [December 2014].

**TABLE 3-1** Events in D.C. Public Education Reform

Year	Event
1968	11-member elected board of education established by Congress.
1995	D.C. School Reform Act of 1995 passed by Congress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>established chartered institutions as public schools and laid out provisions for their governance, and</li> <li>established D.C. Public Charter School Board, which granted some charters.</li> </ul>
1996	D.C. Financial Responsibility and Management Board (the “Control Board”) appointed by the President <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reduced authority of elected school board, and</li> <li>the Control Board had authority to select superintendent.</li> </ul>
2000	D.C. referendum allowing mayor to appoint 4 school board members, total number reduced to 9.
2007	Enactment of PERAA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>established Department of Education headed by the Deputy Mayor,</li> <li>established Office of the State Superintendent of Education,</li> <li>established Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization (OPEFM),</li> <li>established Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education,</li> <li>established Interagency Collaboration and Services Integration Commission (ICSIC),</li> <li>established State Board of Education (replacing Board of Education), and</li> <li>gave Public Charter School Board chartering authority for all charter schools.</li> </ul>
2009	Office of Ombudsman defunded.
2011	OPEFM merged with other city agencies.
2011-2014	ICSIC defunded.
2014	Office of Ombudsman refunded. Office of Student Advocate created.

SOURCE: Data from National Research Council (2011) and Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation (2013b).

Currently, DME manages interagency coordination.<sup>6</sup> In the absence of the entity that PERAA called for, coordination largely takes place in the context of individual projects that involve various office and agencies, such as the Department of Health and Human Services, Superior Court, Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, OSSE, and PCSB. Those projects include

<sup>6</sup>In addition, OSSE runs a program called Strong Start DC that is a “statewide, comprehensive, coordinated, multidisciplinary system that provides early intervention therapeutic and other services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and developmental delays and their families”: see <http://osse.dc.gov/service/strong-start-dc-early-intervention-program-dc-eip> [September 2014]). Although this program is a good example of the value of coordination, it is not broad enough to meet the goals specified in PERAA.

the Truancy Taskforce, the Graduation Pathways Project, and the Youth Re-engagement Center. As another example, DME recently coordinated with the Department of Health to advocate for more nurses to staff both DCPS and charter schools.

In 2012, a public-private entity, Raise DC, was established under the leadership of the DME with the mission of tracking benchmarks related to students' progress to graduation and career and the general goal of supporting interagency coordination.<sup>7</sup> Though established by DME, Raise DC is now completely independent of the D.C. government: it is privately supported, receiving no public funds. Members of Raise DC's leadership council include city officials, such as the deputy mayors of education and health and human services, representatives from local philanthropic and business organizations, and community organizations. In 2013, Raise DC identified a set of indicators on which it hopes to report annually in pursuit of five goals (Raise DC, 2013, p. 11). These goals are similar to those in ICSIC's original mission, but they do not include nonacademic goals related to healthy behaviors and families. In 2014, Raise DC collaborated with DME on the Graduation Pathways Project, which identified factors that influence graduation rates, improvement strategies, and benchmarks to be tracked (see Chapter 5) (Tembo, 2014).

Raise DC's 2013 report notes that "one of the key challenges for sustainability [of interagency coordination] has been the shifting political environment and the lack of organizational capacity needed to keep partners continually focused on the goals of the effort" (p. 39).<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the city has expended effort and resources designing a number of initiatives, getting them under way, and publicizing them, but it has yet to establish a sustainable model for coordination among government agencies. The coordination activities currently led by both DME and Raise DC may be sustained efforts, and both have the potential to expand. However, they do not meet the PERAA goals.

### Office of the Ombudsman

PERAA established an ombudsman in part to provide a new avenue for parents and others to seek information and lodge complaints, a function that had been performed by the former school board. This office is a good example of how the city has adapted in its responses to PERAA. The law

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<sup>7</sup>For more information, see <http://raisedc.net/> [December 2014].

<sup>8</sup>It goes on to note the need to identify another institution, besides DME, to serve as the "anchor or 'backbone'" institution. The Community Foundation of the National Capital Region was identified in 2013 as having taken on that role, and Raise DC, which now has an executive director and 1.5 other staff members, is housed there.

laid out responsibilities for the Office of the Ombudsman, including reaching out to parents and residents; serving as a vehicle for communication; receiving complaints and concerns, determining their validity, and developing a response; identifying systematic concerns using a database; making recommendations based on observed patterns; and issuing annual reports (Title VI). Staff members view the role of the ombudsman as representing the best interests of the student, having no bias in favor of either city staff or families.

This office was established and housed in DME in 2007, defunded in 2010, and reestablished in 2014 in SBOE. There were no procedures or resources in place when the office started again in 2014, so the staff have had to establish those systems.

Collaboration across the city's education agencies is important to the ombudsman's work, but the collaborative relationships are still taking shape. For example, the relationship between the Office of the Ombudsman and PCSB is not yet completely defined. The ombudsman and a PCSB parent liaison group have collaborated, and the two offices agree that the ombudsman's role is to assist PCSB in identifying trends in reported problems and charter practices that may be violating laws. However, it is, in the words of one official, a "delicate balance" because of the possibility that charter LEAs may view the ombudsman's office as "another government agency interfering with charters." Similarly, the means of coordination between the Office of the Ombudsman and OSSE with respect to student discipline are still developing. Recognizing this problem, staff in the Office of the Ombudsman reported that they are working to improve communication about complaints that are filed with more than one agency and to open up channels of communication more generally.

It is too soon to make evaluative judgments about the newly established Office of the Ombudsman, though its first report—issued after just 6 months of operation—provides useful information about issues of concern in the school system (District of Columbia Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education, 2014). However, the new ombudsman faces some challenges in making the office a trusted resource. First, the office has a difficult reputation to overcome. The D.C. Council report that provided the basis for PERAA noted the ombudsman's office that existed before PERAA was "ineffective for . . . reasons including community lack of trust, community perception of the office's inability to resolve problems, rampant turnover and thus an inability to develop trusting relationships, and insufficient staffing to handle the problems presented" (Council of the District of Columbia Committee of the Whole, 2007, p. 18). Moreover, the committee's interviews with agency leaders revealed some skepticism about the value of an ombudsman: several expressed the view that the mayor and high-level administrators do not see the need for an ombudsman. Overall, the interviews

suggested a mixed view of how much benefit the ombudsman can bring to the city's education system under current circumstances.

### USE OF PERAA'S INCREASED FLEXIBILITY AND AUTHORITY

*PERAA gave DCPS and the PCSB authority to continue pursuing their missions and the flexibility to make changes. Both agencies appear to have implemented changes that show promise and to be operating more effectively than they were before PERAA.*

#### The Mayor and DCPS Chancellor

As discussed above, PERAA established the position of DCPS chancellor and gave the chancellor significant latitude in running DCPS (PERAA Title I).<sup>9</sup> The mayor, Adrian Fenty, and the first DCPS chancellor, Michelle Rhee, used that flexibility to pursue several strategies that were prominent on the national reform agenda at the time: use of recruitment, evaluation, and compensation of educators to improve teacher quality; data-driven decision making; more uniform standards across schools; and greater school-level accountability through the use of student testing and other indicators. Most notably, the educator evaluation system was redesigned, and that change led to the dismissal of a large number of educators in the first years of PERAA's implementation. DCPS also focused considerable energy on "right sizing" its schools. That effort included the development of recommendations from DME regarding student assignments and boundaries, as well as the closure of 15 low-enrollment schools to make more efficient use of resources.<sup>10</sup>

PERAA allowed new leaders the possibility of enacting a fundamentally different policy agenda. Even though a new mayor with a different leadership style, Vincent Gray, was elected in 2011, most commentators have noted that the policy agenda and basic approach to managing the public schools did not change significantly. In 2012, a 5-year strategic plan for DCPS was adopted: see Box 3-2. The current mayor, Muriel Bowser, who took office at the beginning of 2015, also has indicated that she does not in-

<sup>9</sup>We cite the provisions of PERAA by title, rather than using official legal citation format, since this report is not intended for legal specialists.

<sup>10</sup>Right sizing (or equalizing) in DCPS, initiated in 2008, has been a process for changing budgets, the utilization of school facilities, and other resources to optimize the match between enrolled students and school spaces: see <http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/Parents+and+Community/Community+Initiatives/DCPS+Consolidation+and+Reorganization+Plan> [March 2015]. This effort has been the subject of considerable controversy although DCPS had closed numerous schools because of enrollment declines before PERAA. A thorough evaluation of the right-sizing plan and its effects was beyond the committee's resources.

**BOX 3-2**  
**DCPS Strategic Goals for 2012-2017**

**Goal 1**

Improve achievement rates [on the DC CAS]: At least 70 percent of students will be proficient in reading and math, and we will double the number of advanced students in the district.

**Goal 2**

Invest in struggling schools: The 40 lowest-performing schools will increase proficiency rates [on the DC CAS] by 40 percentage points.

**Goal 3**

Increase graduation rate: At least 75 percent of entering 9th graders will graduate from high school in 4 years.

**Goal 4**

Improve satisfaction: 90 percent of students will say they like their school.

**Goal 5**

Increase enrollment: DCPS will increase its enrollment over 5 years.

SOURCE: District of Columbia Public Schools (2012).

tend to significantly change the approach that has been established, and she retained the chancellor, Kaya Henderson. It is generally expected that Mayor Bowser also will continue pursuing the goals of the 5-year strategic plan, but it is too soon in her tenure to assess her approach to public education.

DCPS's structure reflects its priorities: see Figure D-1 in Appendix D. Senior officials who report to the chancellor lead the agency's work in 11 areas. There have been several revisions to the DCPS internal office structure, but these changes have not altered the overall approach of the agency.<sup>11</sup>

Particularly because of the approach it took in addressing teacher quality, DCPS has attracted national attention and commentary, with some observers viewing the agency as a leader and others raising concern about the large numbers of teachers who were terminated. We were not able to find any independent assessments of DCPS's functioning as an agency since

<sup>11</sup>One such reorganization is described in DCPS's fiscal 2014 performance plan, p. 2. Available: <http://oca.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/oca/publication/attachments/DCPS14.pdf> [September 2014].

PERAA, nor were we able to conduct such an assessment. Instead, we focused on some of the specific actions that DCPS leaders have taken, which are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. Our examination of these programmatic and policy choices suggests that some of them hold promise for improved functioning, oversight, and provision of services. Or, as one DCPS leader who has been with the agency for several years put it, “You no longer see the culture that makes you want to cry.”

### Public Charter School Board

As noted above, PCSB was created by Congress under the D.C. School Reform Act of 1995,<sup>12</sup> which specified that the board would have seven members appointed by the mayor with the “advice and consent of the Council” (38-1802.14). Until 2006, PCSB shared responsibility for oversight of the charter schools with the former D.C. Board of Education; under PERAA, the existing PCSB was given responsibility for all charter schools.

PERAA also specified the reasons for which a charter may be revoked: failure to meet academic goals set forth in the approved charter or violation of laws or regulations. Subsequent amendments to PERAA included the charter schools in the list of entities under the jurisdiction of the Deputy Mayor for Education (38-191) and designated the Office of the State Board of Education as responsible for approving the list of charter school accreditation organizations (38-2652).<sup>13</sup> PERAA says little else about monitoring and accountability for the charter schools or PCSB itself.

As we discuss in Chapter 2, the charter sector has grown since PERAA was passed. During PCSB’s first 10 years (from 1997 until PERAA was enacted), the number of charter students in the city grew from a few hundred to more than 20,000. Since PERAA, the enrollment has grown to more than 36,000. In total, 102 charters have been granted in D.C., of which 8 never opened and 38 were subsequently closed.<sup>14</sup> PCSB staff we interviewed expressed the view that the agency has also grown larger, stronger, and more professional in this time: see Appendix D for a description of changes in the agency’s mission.

PCSB initially handled accountability by requiring schools to undergo annual reviews of program development, compliance with federal requirements, special education, and financial management (District of Columbia Public Charter School Board, 2007). It could recommend remedies, issue

<sup>12</sup>See <http://www.dcpsb.org/policy/school-reform-act> [April 2015].

<sup>13</sup>See modifications to the text of PERAA in Appendix C.

<sup>14</sup>Some of the charters were granted, revoked, or both by the D.C. Board of Education, which no longer exists. For details, see <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1eko38ox3vJH-IRkSiYBUGvSOQ9kz3Nd9x-74Ud7gBJM/edit> [January 2015].

warnings of its concerns, and revoke charters. Since PERAA, the board has taken steps to strengthen the accountability process. It added self-study review, special education quality review, and high school transcript reviews for some schools in 2008. In 2009, PCSB introduced a new performance management framework, which is mandatory for all charter schools (District of Columbia Public Charter School Board, 2008, 2009).<sup>15</sup> Fully implemented in 2010-2011, the framework was designed to provide common measures for evaluation that included student achievement, high school and college readiness, and nonacademic indicators related to governance, compliance with local and federal laws, and financial management (District of Columbia Public Charter School Board, 2011). In 2011, PCSB added standardized school report cards (District of Columbia Public Charter School Board, 2011).

The program management framework brought additional rigor to PCSB's performance as an authorizer. We identified three external assessments of PCSB's performance as charter authorizer, all developed by charter advocacy organizations. We were not able to corroborate their findings with assessments by nonadvocates, but all rated the agency favorably, using measures that mostly addressed how well PCSB protects the autonomy of charter schools.

We note two issues. On the operating side, concerns have been raised about PCSB's capacity to oversee the finances of individual charter schools. PCSB requested expanded authority to examine the financial records of the organizations that manage charter schools, which the D.C. Council granted (Brown, 2014a) (see budget discussion, below).<sup>16</sup> The other issue relates to how PCSB is evaluated. PCSB asked the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) to assess how well PCSB was meeting its own goals as a charter authorizer because no D.C. agency had been evaluating PCSB's work. Although this external evaluation provided useful guidance for PCSB, it is important to note that PCSB is a member of NACSA, and NACSA has a specific set of interests related to the functioning of charter authorizers. These interests might be different from those that are relevant to understanding and improving school governance in D.C.

The legal requirements pertaining to PCSB are minimal. The 1995 law that established PCSB clearly gave the mayor authority over it by requir-

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<sup>15</sup>In 2012, PCSB began developing a program management framework for early childhood and another for adult education (adult education is offered in seven public charter schools (District of Columbia Public Charter School Board, 2013).

<sup>16</sup>Several charter schools have been accused of financial improprieties (see Brown, 2014a). One formal complaint alleged that a for-profit company diverted funds from a D.C. charter school: see <http://apps.washingtonpost.com/g/documents/local/dc-attorney-general-complaint-for-injunctive-relief-from-community-action-partners-and-charter-school-management-llc/1021/> [January 2015].

ing that he or she appoint all of the members of the board. This procedure remains in place, and we note that after PERAA was enacted, both PCSB and DCPS were added to the list of entities for which the DME is to provide “oversight and support.”<sup>17</sup> The 1995 law also establishes the nongovernmental status of charter schools and their freedom to operate. It sets out limited provisions concerning the role of PCSB and the criteria for the award or revocation of charters. PCSB has recently developed a new system for authorizing and reviewing charters that is more rigorous than the previous one, but the criteria used in this system are completely at the discretion of PCSB. As we note above, PERAA does not explicitly address monitoring or accountability for PCSB itself. We found no evidence that the mayor or DME takes any specific oversight actions other than appointing the board members.

The limited provisions regarding PCSB are a good example of a point noted in Chapter 2: the provisions of a law as written rarely anticipate all the circumstances that will seem important as the law is implemented. In this case, the question that arises is whether PCSB (or any other public body) should have responsibilities that were not anticipated by PERAA, given that charter schools are now educating 46 percent of public school students. This question relates to several other issues we discuss in this report, and we return to it at the end of this chapter and in Chapter 7.

### THE EDUCATION OVERSIGHT AGENCIES

*All three agencies with responsibilities for oversight of public education are attempting to carry out their missions, but the impact of both the State Board of Education and the Deputy Mayor for Education has been modest, and there are serious problems with the functioning of the Office of the State Superintendent of Education.*

In this section’s discussion of whether the new agencies established by PERAA are functioning as intended, it is important to note that the city’s implementation of the law’s provisions have evolved and are still evolving. Legislative amendments and other administrative actions have altered some of the governance structures. Lines of accountability have changed somewhat, and the missions and responsibilities of some offices have shifted (see Table D-1 in Appendix D). Decisions made by leaders within each agency have also been integral to the evolution of the changes brought by PERAA (see Chapter 2).

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<sup>17</sup>See Table D-1 in Appendix D for a description of changes in agencies’ missions and responsibilities since PERAA.

### Deputy Mayor for Education

The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, a position appointed by the mayor, was created by PERAA, but its responsibilities have changed since 2007 (see details in Appendix D). PERAA made DME “responsible for the planning, coordination, and supervision of all public education-related activities under its jurisdiction” (Title II, Sec. 202(b)(2)). DME’s jurisdiction originally included OSSE, the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization, the Office of the Ombudsman, and “a comprehensive, District-wide data system that integrates and tracks data across education, justice, and human service agencies” (Title II, Sec. 202). Additional specific charges included coordinating among city agencies and reporting on the status of a Special Education Task Force and the reform plan it was to develop. It also included the charge to develop a plan for a “statewide, strategic education and youth development plan” that would articulate a “vision statement for children and youth from zero to 24 years of age” and include a time line, progress benchmarks, a framework for coordination with other agencies, and recommendations for policy and legislative changes (Title II). The elaborations in this provision were added after PERAA’s enactment.

PERAA called for the DME to develop a youth development task force. The response to this provision that we could identify is a Youth Reengagement Center, opened late in 2014. The center serves only a small number of students so its range is limited. We were unable to locate documentation of the special education task force that was also specified in PERAA, although city officials reported that the objectives for this requirement have been addressed in other ways, including special education reports and the work of Raise DC.

DME’s portfolio currently looks different in several respects than when the office was established. There have been several subtractions: the Office of the Ombudsman, which was defunded by the mayor in 2010 and subsequently refunded by the D.C. Council, was moved to SBOE; the Office of Public Education Facilities and Modernization is now under the city’s Department of General Services; and the comprehensive, districtwide data system is now under OSSE’s purview. There have also been additions: DCPS and the D.C. public library system are now included in DME’s jurisdiction.

Most of these changes occurred through executive action, rather than legislative amendment, and city officials viewed them as practical, rather than policy, decisions. For example, the view among city officials is that DME is supposed to focus on policy rather than implementation, which explains the transfer of the data system to OSSE. In addition, DME was the logical point of contact between the mayor and DCPS, which is under the mayor’s authority, and the public library system was assigned to DME

as part of the allocation of all agencies to one of the city's five deputy mayors.<sup>18</sup>

Through inter- and intra-agency initiatives and commissioned reports (e.g., IFF, 2012; Ayers Saint Gross Architects + Planners, Fielding Nair International, 2013; The Finance Project and Augenblick, Palaich, and Associates, 2014; Tembo, 2014), the office has focused on selected critical issues in the city, including student assignment and school boundaries, the DC Common Lottery, facilities planning, truancy, graduation, and youth engagement. Overall, however, the DME staff is comparatively small, and its impact so far on public education has been relatively limited. Most important, as we discuss below, we could not find evidence of how the agencies under DME are actually accountable to the DME.

### Office of the State Superintendent of Education

PERAA gave OSSE a significant challenge as a state education agency. The agency has evolved into a large and complicated bureaucracy<sup>19</sup> since the law was adopted but it has struggled to gain its footing and earn the trust of D.C. government officials who must rely on OSSE.

For fiscal 2015, OSSE had a staff of 382 to serve approximately 83,000 students in a jurisdiction that includes 61 charter entities (each of which is formally a local education agency, LEA) and DCPS. To look at just one contrasting example, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in Massachusetts has a staff of 570 to serve 955,844 students in 408 school districts and 81 charter LEAs. In other words, OSSE has one staff member for every 217 students, while the state agency in Massachusetts has one staff member for every 1,677 students. A comparison of the functions of D.C.'s 62 districts (DCPS and the 61 charter LEAs) and those of the 408 districts in Massachusetts might explain some of this difference, but as we discuss below, we also found evidence of management problems.

Handling the responsibilities of a state with respect to public education has long been a challenge in D.C. because of its role as both a state and a school district. OSSE took over the state-level functions that had been carried out by the former Board of Education, which include "grant-making, oversight, and state educational agency functions for standards, assessments, and federal accountability requirements" (Title III, Sec. 302(b)). OSSE was also given specific responsibilities with respect to establishing credit requirements, instructional time, early childhood, the education of children in the

<sup>18</sup>For a chart showing the organization of the entire city government, see [http://mayor.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/mayoromb/publication/attachments/DC-Government-Org-Chart-January022015\\_0.pdf](http://mayor.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/mayoromb/publication/attachments/DC-Government-Org-Chart-January022015_0.pdf) [March 2015].

<sup>19</sup>See Appendix D for an organizational chart.

custody of the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services, and licensure, and it was empowered to “develop and adopt” certain state-level policies, in some cases subject to the approval of the State Board of Education (see below). OSSE is also responsible for special education private-placement tuition and monitoring and for the transportation of all special education students whose individual education plan requires it, whether they are in DCPS, charter schools, or private schools or institutions.<sup>20</sup>

OSSE altered the mission posted on its website during the time of our committee’s study. It currently lists responsibilities that range from managing all educational testing to running the school buses. Because of the scope of OSSE’s work, it was particularly difficult to evaluate its functioning and performance, but two concerns came to our attention: compliance with federal requirements for students with disabilities and management.

Ensuring compliance is one of OSSE’s primary responsibilities. D.C. has been out of compliance with federal requirements regarding students with disabilities for many years, though as we discuss in Chapter 5, there is evidence of recent progress toward compliance. The U.S. Department of Education recently praised OSSE for collaborating across LEAs in implementing federal requirements under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), but it also cited OSSE for failing to meet guidelines with respect to improvement in the lowest-performing schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Looking at management, there has been considerable turnover in the position of state superintendent (appointed by the mayor) since OSSE was established in 2007. There has also been significant turnover among OSSE senior staff. This turnover is preventing OSSE from working steadily toward defined goals: initiatives that are approved and begun are then abandoned when new staff members are hired. Or, as a leader from a different agency put it, “they lurch from crisis to crisis.” The frequent shifts in management priorities that accompany turnover have also affected OSSE’s involvement in projects that are led by other agencies; OSSE’s inconsistent participation in these projects has hurt its credibility with the other agencies.

Concerns about OSSE’s management and functioning have come from many sources. For example, an important accomplishment for OSSE was securing a \$75 million Race to the Top grant,<sup>21</sup> and it undertook a number of initiatives as part of the application process. In early 2014 the U.S. Department of Education placed a hold on \$6.2 million of that grant because of concerns about OSSE’s capacity to manage the funds (Layton, 2014).

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<sup>20</sup>See <http://osse.dc.gov/service/specialized-education-monitoring-and-compliance> [March 2015]; <http://osse.dc.gov/service/nonpublic-invoice-verification> [March 2015]; and <http://osse.dc.gov/service/student-transportation> [March 2015].

<sup>21</sup>See <http://osse.dc.gov/service/race-top-lea-grant-programs> [April 2015].

Many of the top-level officials in other agencies whom we interviewed volunteered that they saw problems with OSSE. These critiques were noteworthy because they were unsolicited. The concerns of these officials focused on the difficulties of finding the right leaders for the agency and on OSSE's capacity to carry out its mission. There have also been public critiques of the agency,<sup>22</sup> and some OSSE staff members we interviewed acknowledged that their history has been rough. These staff members also noted that the high turnover has been problematic, and they reported being overburdened and understaffed. For example, much of the information technology and data-related work, as well as professional development support, has had to be contracted out. Indeed, OSSE cited difficulties with a contractor as the primary reason the data system SLED (discussed below) was not completed on time. At the same time, however, some staff members believe that OSSE is improving, "finally growing up," in the words of one. Still, our evidence indicates that the agency has not yet solved the staffing and management challenges posed by the breadth of its mission or earned the full confidence of officials in other agencies, and we suggest that examination of OSSE's role in D.C.'s city and state education responsibilities is warranted.

### State Board of Education

PERAA provided that the new SBOE "shall advise the Chief State School Officer on various subject matters including, but not limited to, state standards, state policies, state objectives and state regulations proposed by the mayor or the Chief State School Officer and state policies governing the special, academic, vocational, charter and other schools established within the District of Columbia" (Title IV, Sec. 404(a)). SBOE was also to be responsible for "Approval of the state accountability plan for the District of Columbia developed by the Chief State School Officer" (Title IV, Sec. 404(b)(2)) (see Appendix D).<sup>23</sup>

Prior to PERAA, the former Board of Education was responsible for both DCPS and the State Education Agency. PERAA's provisions were

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<sup>22</sup>For example, *The Washington Post* noted in 2011 that "Even supporters of mayoral control concede that the agency has yet to find its footing. Under the 2007 law, it is a kind of second-class entity: a state education agency in a place that is not a state, dealing with a school system led by a chancellor who is the city's dominant educational figure and an unwieldy collection of public charter schools considered separate school districts in the eyes of the law" (Turque, 2011).

<sup>23</sup>We note that state boards of education in the United States vary in their structures and responsibilities (National Association of State Boards of Education, 2014a, 2014b). D.C. is one of eight states with an elected board, and one of only two whose chief is appointed by the chief executive of the jurisdiction. Twenty-three state boards, not including D.C., have the authority to appoint the chief state school officer, and many have authority over teacher licensure, which D.C.'s board does not.

intended to address concerns that the Board of Education was too involved in day-to-day operational issues, that it was consequently inefficient at meeting broader policy objectives, and that the state-level functions were addressed inefficiently by multiple offices (Council of the District of Columbia Committee of the Whole, 2007).

The SBOE office is small and the board does not yet have a strong presence in the city, perhaps in part because its functions are limited and its relationship with other education agencies is not clear. For example, SBOE does not have the power to initiate policies, only to approve or not approve policies suggested by OSSE. However, SBOE has approved academic standards, and it proposed revised graduation requirements and diploma options in 2014.<sup>24</sup> We did not find evidence of other activities the board has undertaken, though it meets regularly.<sup>25</sup>

## COORDINATION

*The way that the education oversight and other agencies currently work together to govern and administer the city's public schools does not meet PERAA's goals. The agencies do take steps to coordinate with one another but the mechanisms compelling them to do so are limited. Consequently, the degree of coordination among them depends heavily on the collegiality of city leaders and other officials, rather than on organizational incentives and well-defined procedures.*

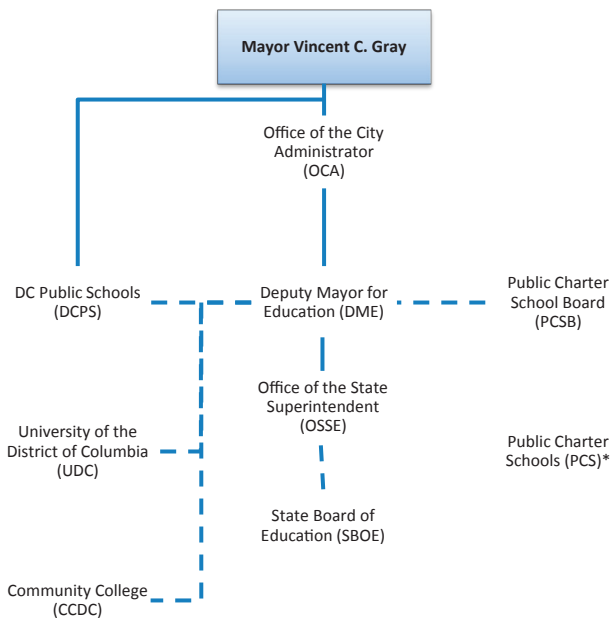
### Coordination Among the Oversight Bodies

PERAA established OSSE, DME, and SBOE to oversee the public schools, without specifying the working relationships among these entities. There is frequent collaboration across all of the education entities, but some of the direct lines of accountability and authority play a less significant role; see Figure 3-2.

As noted above, we could not identify any specific ways in which the agencies under DME's charge are accountable to it. For example, the PERAA language indicates that the DME will supervise OSSE and other agencies, and this structure is reflected in Figures 3-1, above, and 3-2, below. Yet OSSE and DME view their relationship as largely collaborative rather than supervisory, even though the mayor appoints the superintendent. DME now includes DCPS in its charge because the chancellor reports

<sup>24</sup>D.C. is in the process of implementing the Common Core standards; these and the graduation requirements are discussed in Chapter 5.

<sup>25</sup>Meeting dates and some supporting materials are available at <http://sboe.dc.gov/page/sboe-meeting-information> [September 2014].



\*Public charter schools are operated by autonomous local education agencies (LEAs).

FIGURE 3-2 Organizational chart of D.C. education agencies as of 2013.  
SOURCE: Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (2013).

to the mayor, yet neither DCPS nor PCSB was included in DME’s jurisdiction in PERAA’s original language.

The advisory relationship between SBOE and OSSE is similarly unsettled. The SBOE website notes that “in 2013, the SBOE became an independent agency from OSSE. The State Board works collaboratively with OSSE whenever possible.”<sup>26</sup> We did not find a legislative amendment that made this change. According to one city official, OSSE’s role is to bring ideas to SBOE for approval—the board cannot initiate or implement initiatives on its own.

PERAA was specific in making OSSE responsible for many state functions, as noted above. The law also established that OSSE would “have

<sup>26</sup>See <http://sboe.dc.gov/page/sboe-faqs> [September 2014].

state responsibility for management and oversight of the public education system in the District of Columbia,” but it did not elaborate on what that general management and oversight would entail (Council of the District of Columbia Committee of the Whole, 2007, p. 22). The agency budget and staffing information we reviewed (see Table D-2 in Appendix D) gives the impression that OSSE, with 382 staff members, is the lead education agency and that the DME and SBOE with (16 and 18 staff members, respectively) were designed to play policy and advisory roles. However, as we discuss above, OSSE has not yet fully assumed this mantle.

### Coordination Between DCPS and the Charter Sector

Collaboration across DCPS and the charter schools was not an explicit goal of PERAA when the law was enacted, but such collaboration is increasingly important because the charter population has grown significantly, and there are points of intersection among all of the DCPS and charter schools. Perhaps most important is that students move between and among DCPS and charter schools from year to year and within academic years, which raises many issues, including the allocation of resources, academic continuity, and policies for students with disabilities and other needs for support. In 2012, for example, only 25 percent of public school students attended the neighborhood school to which they would be assigned according to boundary definitions. This low percentage reflects not only charter school attendance but also the special programs offered by DCPS—such as dual-language or immersion programs, International Baccalaureate, Montessori—that are open to all students by either lottery or selective admission (21st Century School Fund, 2014). These issues complicate the governance structure and the development of incentives for schools and charter schools to achieve PERAA’s goals.

### Collaborative Efforts

Early evaluations suggest that the relationship between DCPS and the charter sector began with a noticeable degree of mutual suspicion: charter school leaders were sometimes dissatisfied regarding such issues as access to information and facilities, and DCPS leaders were sometimes apprehensive that the charters would siphon resources and support from their schools (Henig et al., 1999, 2001).

As of 2015, there is evidence that DCPS and PCSB have made efforts to collaborate. For example, the two have cooperated (with DME) in the development of the My School DC common lottery process that allows families to apply to some (though not all) city public schools through one online application. The planning for the implementation of the Common

Core standards and assessments is another instance of productive cooperation (see Chapter 5). Twenty-two DCPS and charter schools participated in the DC Common Core Collaborative, an initiative led by the E.L. Haynes charter school, in which a lesson study approach is being used to support teachers.<sup>27</sup> Collaboration among DME, OSSE, DCPS, and PCSB has also occurred for the development of the equity reports described below, profiles of individual DCPS and charter schools that allow comparisons among them.<sup>28</sup> One high-level official who participated in the development process said that the common language that the equity reports offer for discussing basic school attributes has been helpful to the relationship among DCPS and the charter schools.

### Ongoing Sources of Tension

Other aspects of the relationship, however, are sources of tension. Long-standing issues have included coordination over the location of new schools, student mobility across sectors, and capital investment.<sup>29</sup> Here we address the issues of school location and student mobility.

**School Location.** DCPS and public school advocates believe that better coordination with respect to facilities is needed. They argue that having a charter school located near a DCPS school that serves a similar population is counterproductive. The current DCPS chancellor has noted publicly that “either we want neighborhood schools or we want cannibalism, but you can’t have both” (quoted in Brown, 2014b).

From the perspective of PCSB and charter school advocates, facilities coordination presents difficulties. A charter has to be established and approved based in part on evidence of need for what it will offer before a location is even established. Once the charter is approved, the LEA must hunt for space, which is scarce. If the LEA is denied an available space because it is too near a DCPS school, the approved new charter school might not be able to open. PCSB staff believe that proximity to another school is not a valid reason for denying a charter the right to open and that proximity

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<sup>27</sup>For more information about the program, Professional Learning Communities of Effectiveness (PLACES), see <http://www.elhaynes.org/innovate-practitioners.php> [February 2015].

<sup>28</sup>Available at the LearnDC website maintained by OSSE; see <http://www.learnDC.org/> [February 2015].

<sup>29</sup>The D.C. Association of Chartered Public Schools, an advocacy group, filed a lawsuit on the grounds that the city has not provided uniform funding to DCPS and charter schools. For an example of public commentary on the issue, see <http://greatergreatereducation.org/post/23592/the-dcps-charter-relationship-is-getting-heated-in-this-education-hot-spot/> [February 2015].

may even benefit the DCPS school: not surprisingly, DCPS staff do not see the situation that way.

DME formed an advisory committee to review attendance zones, feeder patterns, and school choice and make recommendations to address facilities coordination and other problems. The resulting report (DC Advisory Committee on Student Assignment, 2014) acknowledged the need for further review of the decision-making process regarding DCPS and charter school facilities, but it did not offer specific recommendations for how to resolve the issue.<sup>30</sup> The report therefore recommended that DME establish a new representative task force to address methods for sharing information about facilities and enrollment across the two sectors, means of improving accountability and transparency for decision making, and processes for obtaining and considering public opinion.

**Student Mobility.** In order to examine student mobility in D.C., we requested data on mobility across the LEAs from OSSE. OSSE’s response was that these data were not available, but we located a link to a set of publicly available slides summarizing 2011-2012 mobility data from OSSE.<sup>31</sup> In that year, OSSE reported 1,912 students moved from a charter school to a DCPS school, and 3,286 moved from a DCPS school to a charter school. DCPS had a net gain for the year of 338 students, and the charters had a net loss of 1,947 students. A PCSB report indicates that in 2014, the charter sector had a 4.5 percent average “new movement (midyear withdrawal or entry),” as compared with a 0.9 percent citywide average for the same year.<sup>32</sup>

Coordination and information sharing are important to the academic progress of students who move—whether between types of schools or geographically (see National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2010). Ideally, information about mobility would be systematically available on a central website so that mobility patterns across schools and sectors and across time could be evaluated.

### Challenges to Improving Coordination

Despite these ongoing tensions, leaders from both DCPS and PCSB expressed the hope that the DCPS and charter schools would continue to learn from each other and adopt approaches that have proven effective, rather

<sup>30</sup>The advisory committee’s PCSB representative resigned because of an objection to a recommendation regarding giving priority to “at-risk” students in the systemwide lottery (DC Advisory Committee on Student Assignment, 2014, p. 12).

<sup>31</sup>See [http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/release\\_content/attachments/DC%20Student%20Mobility%20Study%20%28Feb%202013%29.pdf](http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/release_content/attachments/DC%20Student%20Mobility%20Study%20%28Feb%202013%29.pdf) [April 2015].

<sup>32</sup>See <http://www.dcpsb.org/report/school-equity-reports-0> [April 2015].

than viewing the relationship as oppositional. The current DCPS chancellor has said publicly that she would like to see DCPS have the authority to authorize charter schools and benefit from some of the flexibility afforded to them.

Nevertheless, the current governance structure does not include mechanisms for encouraging or requiring that the DCPS and the other LEAs coordinate or collaborate.

Although D.C. has been called a “pioneer” in its adoption of charter schools, how to coordinate them with DCPS for the benefit of the city’s students is not evident. One challenge is that the charter sector, by definition, is decentralized. Charter schools were designed to have the autonomy to make many decisions independently. DCPS has the capacity to implement policies as a system, but there is no agency functioning in that capacity for the charter LEAs. As we discuss in Chapter 5, this fragmentation is a particular problem for serving the needs of English-language learners and special education students.

One way to promote coordination would be to give PCSB more authority over the individual charters. However, that approach runs the risk of creating an alternate school system, which would undermine the logic of having charter schools. Although OSSE might be the logical agency to foster greater coordination between DCPS and the charter sector, it has not played that role to date. Thus, the city is left to consider how best to ensure sufficient monitoring of the quality of education of all students attending any type of school at public expense.

### DATA COLLECTION AND ACCESS, THE BUDGETING PROCESS, AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

*In our examination of three areas that could reflect progress toward PERAA’s overall goals—data collection and access, budget transparency, and public engagement—we found mixed evidence. Efforts to improve data collection and access and to enhance public engagement appear to be bringing results, although neither approach is yet fully meeting the city’s needs. The budgeting process does not appear to be either simpler or more transparent.*

Because we could not examine every aspect of school governance in detail, we focused on three key issues that might both reflect and support coordination and oversight: (1) the collection of and ready access to information about students, teachers, and schools, (2) transparency in budget decisions and the allocation of resources in ways that reflect the public’s priorities, and (3) public engagement. Our review of each of these areas identifies accomplishments and challenges for further improvement.

### Data Collection and Accessibility

*The city greatly increased the amount of data available on its public websites during the time of our evaluation, but there is still room for considerable improvement in coordinating what is already available and in making more comprehensive information available.*

The original text of PERAA gave DME the responsibility to oversee the “development of a comprehensive, District-wide data system that integrates and tracks data across education, justice, and human service agencies” (Title II, Sec. 202(b)(1)(D)). Part of the purpose for maintaining a shared database was to support the work of ICSIC, the coordination body called for by PERAA (which no longer exists). To understand the availability of data about the public schools, we examined agency websites repeatedly over time, requested data and other information from city officials, and included questions about data availability in many of our interviews both with officials in leadership roles and with other agency staff members and experts in the community who routinely monitor and analyze educational data in D.C.

PERAA focused on the value of an integrated system for collecting and sharing education data to support the interagency coordination entity it called for, but there are other important reasons to collect data. Many states collect data on students from preschool through postsecondary education; on educators; and on other aspects of public education such as facilities, curriculum, and resources (see Data Quality Campaign, 2013, for discussion of states’ roles; Gill et al., 2014). The information can be used to identify trends over time and to support policy and programmatic decisions, and is critical to evaluation and continuous improvement. Many states are able to link education data with data collected by other agencies concerned with health, welfare, and employment, for example.<sup>33</sup>

D.C. agencies collect a considerable amount of data. As D.C.’s state education agency, OSSE has numerous specific data collection functions—in particular its responsibility for meeting federal requirements entails data collection—and the agency received a \$5.7 million federal grant for this purpose in 2007. As the state agency, OSSE would logically be expected to have primary responsibility for maintaining centralized data on public education. And indeed, developing a data warehouse has been a key goal for OSSE.

In 2007, OSSE began work on a new system, the Statewide Longitudinal Education Data Warehouse (SLED) (Glazerman, 2010; Office of the

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<sup>33</sup>For more on state-level data systems, see [http://www.ccsso.org/What\\_We\\_Do/Education\\_Data\\_and\\_Information\\_Systems.html](http://www.ccsso.org/What_We_Do/Education_Data_and_Information_Systems.html) [May 2015].

State Superintendent of Education, 2010). SLED was to collect data on early childhood and K-12 education, special education, and demographics and enrollment, as well as data from other city agencies, human resources and professional development data, and data on postsecondary education. A vendor was hired to develop the system but was subsequently terminated. By 2010, OSSE reported that it had begun assigning unique student identifier numbers, had developed prototypes of the website, and expected at least portions of the site to be available to the schools (though not to parents or the public) by summer 2011. OSSE staff indicated that parents would eventually have access to SLED data pertaining to their children, but that access was not expected for at least 3 years after the launch of the initial site.

At that time, it was envisioned that SLED would collect data in a single repository that would allow historical views and the ability to link data across systems (Office of the State Superintendent of Education, 2011). It would not, however, be linked to a separate system, known as SEDS, that tracks special education data, or to another system for charter data, called OLAMS (no longer in existence),<sup>34</sup> that was maintained by PCSB.<sup>35</sup>

When asked about its data activities for the Phase I report (National Research Council, 2011), OSSE staff predicted that SLED would be in place by mid-2011. A report to the U.S. Department of Education submitted by OSSE as part of its Race to the Top requirements indicated that SLED became operational in fall 2012,<sup>36</sup> and as this report goes to press SLED is functioning.<sup>37</sup> However, it does not provide the range of information about students' educational growth and development from early care through elementary and secondary school and into college and career that was expected to be available. In March 2015, the SLED website provided adjusted cohort graduation rates for 2010-2011, a one-page fact sheet about the D.C. public schools, comparable fact sheets for each of the eight wards, enrollment audit information for charter and traditional schools for the years 2001-2009, and a dashboard allowing users to review DC CAS proficiency results for 2008. The OSSE website also posts a variety of other

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<sup>34</sup>A public notice reported that OLAMS was shut down on June 30, 2011, see <http://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/DCWASH/bulletins/94a60> [October 2014].

<sup>35</sup>For OSSE's explanation of difficulties with compatibility between SLED and the student information systems used by LEAs, see [http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/SLED\\_Demo\\_QA.pdf](http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/SLED_Demo_QA.pdf) [October 2014].

<sup>36</sup>For more information, see <https://www.rtt-apr.us/state/district-of-columbia/2012-2013/caer> [October 2014].

<sup>37</sup>See <https://sled.osse.dc.gov/SitePages/Home.aspx> [March 2015]. However, on another page, the OSSE website still describes SLED as a future endeavor, see <http://osse.dc.gov/service/statewide-longitudinal-education-data-system-sled> [March 2015].

information, such as enrollment audits, annual yearly progress reports, and graduation rate data.<sup>38</sup>

OSSE has developed another website, LearnDC,<sup>39</sup> identified as a “one-stop education resource.” That website provides a considerable amount of information about individual schools (both DCPS and charter) and some summary information for the entire district, including DC CAS summary results, results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), graduation rates, attendance, and the percentage of courses taught by highly qualified teachers (see Chapter 6 for discussion of these data).<sup>40</sup> In addition, OSSE, DCPS, PCSB, and DME have collaborated to develop “Equity Reports,” which became available in 2014. These reports are described as “a complement to OSSE’s LearnDC school profiles, DCPS’ school scorecards and PCSB’s performance management framework.”<sup>41</sup> The equity reports provide data that parents can use to assess individual schools and compare them with one another and with citywide averages for certain information.

The PCSB website recently developed a data portal and was adding material during the time we were completing our report. The site posts the equity reports and other data and documents, most of which concern individual schools.<sup>42</sup> A summary equity report posted in January 2015—distinct from the equity reports for individual schools—provided aggregated demographic, discipline, and achievement data for the charter sector in comparison to the citywide average.<sup>43</sup>

All of these sites changed frequently during the time we were gathering information, and the committee notes the continual progress that has been made. For example, as we were preparing the report for publication, we found a new web page on the DCPS site, the DCPS Interactive Data Center, on which budget and enrollment information for fiscal 2015 and 2016 is posted.<sup>44</sup> We also found data showing the numbers of students with disabilities in each classification served by DCPS and charter schools, as well as data on enrollment trends for the two sectors. However, there is no guide to what material is available where: there is duplication in the data on the

<sup>38</sup>See <http://osse.dc.gov/service/data> [March 2015].

<sup>39</sup>See <http://www.learnDC.org/> [September 2014].

<sup>40</sup>Another site, Capstat, was the source of useful information for the committee’s Phase I report, but it is no longer operational.

<sup>41</sup>See <http://osse.dc.gov/publication/dcps-equity-reports-sy-2012-2013> [February 2015].

<sup>42</sup>See <https://data.dcpsb.org/> [February 2015].

<sup>43</sup>See <http://www.dcpsb.org/sites/default/files/report/Final%202014%20Equity%20Reports%2C%20Charter%20Trends.%201-27-15%20ry.pdf> [February 2015].

<sup>44</sup>See <http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/About+DCPS/DCPS+Data> and click on “DCPS Data Center” [April 2015].

various websites, and it is quite difficult to identify all the possible sources of information and establish which are unique.<sup>45</sup>

Several DCPS officials we interviewed discussed the use of data to support their own decision making. For example, through sharing of SLED data that are not made public with the Department of Human Services (about families receiving food or assistance<sup>46</sup> and children in foster care), OSSE provided input on D.C.'s student funding formula. Another example is a report on pathways to graduation, which synthesized a range of data to identify key reasons that students do not continue on the track to graduation and uses that analysis to identify strategies for addressing the problem and develop an early warning system to identify students at risk (Tembo, 2014). These reported examples suggest that some city officials are using data internally in ways that reflect what has been learned in high-performing districts (see, e.g., Zavadsky and Dolejs, 2006), but we were not able to examine these internal activities or their effects.

Although the progress being made on data use is encouraging, more is possible for the city. SLED and LearnDC understandably keep student-level data confidential, but there are types of information that researchers and others could use to examine questions that cross sectors. If, for example, data about students in particular groups, and those who fall into more than one group, could be examined across all of the public schools (not just DCPS) and across time, users could better explore accountability for those groups. At present, most information is available only by schools, for DCPS overall, and for the individual charter LEAs and schools. We made numerous requests to each of the education agencies for access to the underlying data that would permit aggregation, but we did not receive it (see Appendix A).

To test our thinking about data accessibility in D.C., we examined the websites of several states. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, for example, maintains a website<sup>47</sup> that allows users to click tabs to generate profiles of the state as a whole, indi-

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<sup>45</sup>For example, on the OSSE page are equity reports for individual schools that provide data on enrollment discipline and attendance, DC CAS (Comprehensive Assessment System) performance, and midyear entry and withdrawal. The LearnDC site posts the same equity reports for individual schools in a different format; DCPS profiles for individual DCPS schools that also include information about clubs, sports, and facilities (these profiles are also posted on the DCPS website); brief school report cards that provide snapshots of the DC CAS and attendance data, as well as the percentage of highly qualified teachers and a school classification; profiles that summarize the equity report data; and a link for each school to a rating developed for an independent website called Great Schools (see <http://www.greatschools.org/> [April 2015]).

<sup>46</sup>Such aid comes through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, two federal assistance programs for low-income families.

<sup>47</sup>See <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu> [October 2014].

vidual districts, and schools. Tabs for the state provide data on students, teachers, finance, assessment, and accountability, much of it disaggregated by demographic groups. Another section of the website<sup>48</sup> provides detailed data on indicators collected through the District Analysis and Review Tools Program and allows users to compare district performance. The Kentucky Department of Education has a tab for researchers<sup>49</sup> that provides data on districts and schools, as well as a state-level report card that has tabs for detailed data on accountability, assessment, program review, learning environment, finances, indicators for improvement goals, and career and technical education.<sup>50</sup> Florida and Illinois also have useful online information systems.<sup>51</sup>

These state websites demonstrate two important attributes of an effective state data warehouse: (1) an efficient and comprehensive system for collecting and maintaining the sorts of information the state needs to monitor its own performance and progress and (2) a platform for making these data, as well as associated documentation of programs and policies, readily available to parents, the community, policy makers, and researchers. It was difficult for the committee to systematically assess the first attribute because we could not develop a complete picture of what internal data may be available and which agency officials collect and use them. And although D.C. collects a great deal of data and documentation, its system does not have the second attribute. The committee recognizes that other states are in varying stages with respect to developing and maintaining data warehouses, but this is a critical function that merits high priority.

The lack of readily available data presented a significant challenge for our committee, and it is a source of frustration for some senior DCPS officials who would like to rely more heavily on data to support their decision making. More important, it is a significant gap for education governance in the city. Public access to comprehensive data across DCPS and all the charter LEAs in the city would support tracking and analysis of key information about schools and students, particularly with respect to students with disabilities and English-language learners (see Chapter 5). Valuable information the city may have is either not made public or is difficult to find in education-related websites that are not coordinated. We note also that PCSB updated its website recently and now requires users to go through

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<sup>48</sup>See <http://www.doe.mass.edu/apa/dart/default.html> [October 2014].

<sup>49</sup>See <http://education.ky.gov/research/Pages/default.aspx> [October 2014].

<sup>50</sup>See <http://applications.education.ky.gov/SRC/ProfileByState.aspx> [October 2014].

<sup>51</sup>For research on organizational report cards, see Fung et al. (2007).

a subscription-based service to download some of its reports and other documents.<sup>52</sup>

The city would benefit from having easier access to a broad range of information that would allow users to see comparisons across student groups, trends over time, and other analyses to address accountability questions across the entire jurisdiction (all DCPS and charter schools). It would also benefit from a clear understanding of the ways in which different education officials are using different types of data as they monitor and work to improve education quality.

### The Budgeting Process

*The budgeting process does not appear to be either simpler or more transparent than it was before PERAA.*

For some city residents, the budget process for public education has long been a source of concern and frustration, and the growth of the charter sector has only exacerbated that frustration. Ongoing debates, lawsuits, and studies have highlighted concerns about both the adequacy of education resources for all students and parity between the charter sector and DCPS.<sup>53</sup> Because a thorough examination of education-related allocations, expenditures, funding adequacy, reporting, and compliance was beyond our charge, we focused on how the changes and choices brought by PERAA have influenced the planning that is necessary to develop a fair and sound budget and the extent to which the public has input into that process. Our discussion of the transparency of the budgeting process is based on documentation available on agency websites; a study conducted for the DME (The Finance Project and Augenblick, Palaich, and Associates, 2013); interviews with budget analysts outside the government and PCSB staff, and fact-checking conversations with knowledgeable experts in the community. Our requests to speak with various DCPS budgeting officials went unanswered.

PERAA does not specifically address education budgeting, though the change in DCPS's position from an independent agency to one under the direct control of the mayor did lead to changes in the budgeting process.

Before PERAA, the budgeting process started earlier in the fiscal year and included more public input than it currently does. OSSE's predecessor,

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<sup>52</sup>For example, downloading the full report posted here requires a paid membership in the service Scribd: see <https://www.scribd.com/doc/238691457/2014-Discipline-and-Attendance-Briefing> [February 2015].

<sup>53</sup>See, for example, The Finance Project and Augenblick, Palaich, and Associates (2013); [http://www.21csf.org/csf-home/DocUploads/DataShop/DS\\_372.pdf](http://www.21csf.org/csf-home/DocUploads/DataShop/DS_372.pdf) [February 2015]; and <http://www.dcfpi.org/areas-of-research/education> [February 2015].

the State Education Office, convened a technical working group to make recommendations about D.C.'s student funding formula that would supplement input from the D.C. school board and the relevant D.C. Council committee. The working group held public hearings and meetings, and parents and others in the community brought specific issues and questions to board members. In addition, the superintendent convened a committee of DCPS administrators, principals, teachers, union representatives, parents, and community representatives to grapple with how to allocate funds under the weighted student formula instituted by then-Superintendent Arlene Ackerman beginning in fiscal 2000. Participants in and observers of the process whom we interviewed agreed that the committee's recommendations strongly influenced the superintendent's and school board's budget decisions. The committee was disbanded in 2007.

The committee structure and technical working group have not been used since PERAA's passage. Currently, DCPS leaders conduct workshops and hold community meetings to get input on their budget priorities. They also conduct a budget hearing, which is required by law.

Budget experts outside the government and others in the community have expressed concern that the current DCPS budgeting process allows too little time for input on the budget. In D.C., the fiscal year runs from October through September. Budgets are developed by the mayor and approved by the D.C. Council each June.<sup>54</sup> The overall education budget is determined by projected enrollment numbers for DCPS and for the charter schools as a group, which are established in October, and revenue forecasts, which are released in February. The funds are paid out to DCPS on the basis of the projections, based on the audited October count of the prior year, and to the charters on the basis of their audited October counts for the current year. Charter schools are paid quarterly, with subsequent adjustments to their audited counts in their April payment, after the audit is completed (in January or February) (D.C. Code § 38-2901).

The D.C. Council hearings on agency budgets take place in April and May. This time line means that DCPS schools typically only have a few weeks from the release of the revenue forecasts to develop their budgets and allocate their funds. According to one nongovernmental budget analyst, local school advisory teams and parents have struggled to "digest the budget and make key decisions" on such a compressed time line. Charter schools are not so constrained—they proceed by their own schedules, though if their enrollment does not match their projections, they will have a budget

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<sup>54</sup>The budget is then transmitted to Congress, which appropriates it along with the rest of the federal budget, and then to the President for his signature. Congress has line-item authority over the D.C. budget. Although Congress has not recently exercised this authority, it could put restrictions on the use of the budget.

shortfall later in the year. Charters can protect against this eventuality by saving up a reserve, because they can carry funds over from one fiscal year to the next; DCPS, by law, cannot do so.

Related to the lack of input and compressed time line is the larger question of transparency. A 2013 study commissioned by DME to determine the cost of providing an education that enables all students to meet rigorous academic standards provided a valuable overview of issues with the transparency in reporting expenditures (The Finance Project and Augenblick, Palaich, and Associates, 2013, p. 27):

[E]ducation budgeting, resource allocation, and financial reporting are not clear and easily traceable processes in DCPS or public charter schools. The state of financial recordkeeping makes it difficult to determine the total amount spent by cost category or to assess cost drivers and cost variations within and among DCPS and public charter schools. It is also difficult to trace funding from the source to the student and to understand the total amount of education spending in the city and how it is allocated to individual schools and to central office functions.

That study (commonly referred to as the adequacy study) found the lack of transparency to be particularly acute in the areas of capital investments and facilities maintenance and operations costs.

The nongovernmental budget experts we interviewed offered other specific concerns about the current budget reporting process. Those concerns covered a range of issues, including that

- it is difficult to determine how much funding is provided for each student who is considered at risk, even though such tracking is required by law;
- the equity between school types and wards is not well understood because the costs and expenditures are not broken out per pupil or for student groups;
- the actual DCPS budget does not match the records of the chief financial officer (CFO);
- the DCPS budget categories can vary from year to year and are seen as political; and
- the determination of comparability between DCPS and charter schools can be difficult because of different reporting formats and budget categories.

To some extent, the charter sector has greater transparency than does DCPS. An independent budget analyst noted that charters “publish everything” related to their budgets but that their expenditures “get lumped

into big categories,” which can make it difficult to determine exactly how the money is spent.<sup>55</sup> There are no standardized formats or definitions in charter schools’ budgets or audits, though the PCSB is making progress in this area. The adequacy study also commented on the difficulty of ascertaining charter facility costs. In addition, the charter management organizations’ accounts are not open to the public, and there have been cases of mismanagement.<sup>56</sup> The D.C. Council passed a law in March 2015 that is designed to improve fiscal transparency for the public charter schools.<sup>57</sup>

For its part, DCPS has taken steps in recent years to improve budget transparency. For example, DCPS has posted raw budget data for every school online, developed a “facts and figures” budget guide, and created an interactive data center (although it does not include per-pupil spending amounts). In addition, the D.C. Council Committee on Education has tried to make the CFO’s budget book more understandable by matching the actual DCPS budget to the CFO’s budget book. Continued progress along these lines could benefit the city by making information about budgets and expenditures more easily accessible to D.C. residents.

As we have noted above and in Chapter 2, changes in the budget development and reporting processes were not necessary results of PERAA. Instead, they stemmed from the choices of the mayor, the chancellor, and other leaders, using the flexibility PERAA made possible. Two other notable changes that are indirectly related to budgeting have occurred under mayoral control: the integration of DCPS into city government and increases in overall school funding.

On the first point, mayoral control has allowed DCPS to become more integrated with other city agencies and better take advantage of the services they provide. Before PERAA, the city was already trying to integrate services for DCPS with agencies that provide such services outside of public education. More of these transformations have occurred since PERAA. Now, for example, the Office of the Chief Technology Officer provides information technology services to DCPS, although this service also is still partly covered through the DCPS budget.<sup>58</sup> Other services have been taken out of the DCPS budget: legal services are provided by the city’s attorney general, and facilities maintenance, construction, and planning are the responsibility of the Department of General Services.

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<sup>55</sup>The definition of budget categories has also been noted as a concern for those who observe and work with DCPS budgets.

<sup>56</sup>See, for example, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/dc-charter-board-moves-to-revoke-charter-for-community-academy/2014/12/16/12eeac5a-84d8-11e4-9534-f79a23c40e6c\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/dc-charter-board-moves-to-revoke-charter-for-community-academy/2014/12/16/12eeac5a-84d8-11e4-9534-f79a23c40e6c_story.html) [March 2015].

<sup>57</sup>See <http://lims.dccouncil.us/Legislation/B21-0115> [March 2015].

<sup>58</sup>According to two budget experts we spoke with, these services are budgeted inside DCPS, and DCPS makes interagency transfers to cover the costs.

On the second point, it is worth noting that funding for schools has increased since PERAA. One possible explanation for this increase is that PERAA called greater attention to problems in the D.C. education system. Another explanation is that PERAA has given D.C.'s mayors a greater sense of ownership and investment in the schools.

Although other leaders might not have chosen to direct additional supports and services to the schools, several long-time observers and participants in D.C. education and governance noted that this sense of investment had been missing before PERAA—even when the mayor could appoint four of nine school board members.

### Public Engagement

*DCPS and PCSB have made efforts beyond the Office of the Ombudsman to address the need for improved public engagement.*

PERAA called for the city to hire an ombudsman, required the new DCPS chancellor to obtain parental input and hold public meetings, and charged SBOE with holding monthly public meetings to receive citizen input. It made no other specific requirements with respect to family and community engagement. However, public engagement is a vital aspect of public accountability in any school district, and we address it as a separate topic because of its importance.

To learn about the city's efforts to improve public engagement and accountability the committee conducted interviews with city officials and reviewed documents provided by those officials as well as some that we located independently. A report prepared by the research consortium DC-EdCORE examined the strategies and institutional approaches used by D.C. officials to engage the families and community members (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2014d). The authors of that report conducted interviews with city officials, parents, and others to obtain independent views of these efforts. The questions for these interviews were shaped in part by the issues that came up in the public meetings held by the committee.

The creation of the position of ombudsman to serve the entire public school community was the most prominent way PERAA addressed the issue of public engagement (see discussion of this office above). DCPS and PCSB also each have staff to address this issue, and we discuss those public engagement efforts in this section.

## DCPS Activities

DCPS has an Office of Public Engagement, with a staff of 12-13 people and a separate response team (housed in the Office of the Deputy Chancellor) to address complaints. The response team grew in size in the years when there was no ombudsman. A 2011 document available on the website of the Office of Public Engagement provides an overview of its goals and evidence of the role of engagement in academic success.<sup>59</sup>

A primary mission of the office is to “provide the knowledge and support necessary for parents to support children’s education and make sure schools are a welcoming environment.” The office also engages with individuals who would like to contribute to citywide decision making and shape policy. That engagement occurs primarily with the central office, rather than with schools.

At the family level, DCPS currently is operating a home visiting program in 21 schools. Schools apply to participate, and teachers receive intensive professional development designed to provide them with tools for engaging with families and sharing lessons with one another. Families are then encouraged to invite teachers to visit their homes. Teachers do academic planning with parents, provide games that reinforce school activities, and build relationships with students and their families.

At the community level, DCPS uses public meetings, a parent cabinet with representatives from all eight wards, regular meetings with the public and with ward education councils,<sup>60</sup> including small help sessions in the homes of parent volunteers. For example, DCPS held meetings in the wards affected by school consolidations to gather views about potential problems and to allow residents to ask questions.

The DCPS Office of Public Engagement has developed new strategies to meet the needs of younger families, such as web-based tools and rapid-response e-mail. The issues of concern vary across the city, and the office works with parent-teacher associations to avoid the possibility that traditional fund-raising and other volunteer activities exclude some families. One concern is that such volunteer efforts may support more enrichment (such as an after-school foreign language teacher) in schools in wealthier communities, where fundraising is more common, than in other schools. Public engagement staff address this gap by facilitating the sharing of skills, such as grant writing, across schools.

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<sup>59</sup>See <http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/Files/downloads/COMMUNITY/Parents/Family%20and%20Public%20Engagement%20-%20Where%20we%20are%20going.pdf> [January 2014].

<sup>60</sup>Some of city’s wards have volunteer councils to represent their communities on public education issues.

## PCSB Activities

PCSB approaches public engagement differently because the charter LEAs do not function as a single entity. Each LEA has its own board of trustees, and PCSB points to those boards as the primary mechanism for parent involvement in the schools. According to one PCSB official, 640 D.C. residents currently serve on charter school boards. By law the majority of each board must be city residents, and at least two members of every board must be parents.<sup>61</sup> Because PCSB considers the possibility that choosing a school for their children is a source of empowerment for parents, the agency has focused on letting parents know which schools it considers to be high quality.

PCSB's own board, which has seven members appointed by the mayor, holds monthly meetings and public hearings. The PCSB communications office holds sessions focused on particular topics, such as charter LEAs' obligations with respect to Title IX.<sup>62</sup>

PCSB also receives and addresses complaints from parents in a way that is common in other school districts. Their first response is to direct the person making the complaint to the director of the school or the LEA's board of directors. PCSB staff then follows up to be sure the complaint was resolved.

The interviews conducted by EdCORE provided anecdotal accounts of public engagement and accountability under PERAA from a group that included parents and others in the community. These interviews did not constitute a scientific sample, but they do suggest areas in which there may be room for improvement (see Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2015).

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

We were asked two broad questions about the impact of the governance changes brought about by PERAA: whether the structures and roles outlined in PERAA were implemented as intended and whether they improved coordination and efficiency and established clearer lines of authority. We found that city officials have been responsive to PERAA's goals and used its provisions in pursuit of improved operations. Both DCPS and PCSB have used new flexibility afforded by the law, and the education oversight agencies have worked to meet the charges given to them.

It would be unrealistic to expect a law such as PERAA to effectively address all of the problems that prompted it, or even to work in practice

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<sup>61</sup>The committee was not able to independently confirm the composition of the boards.

<sup>62</sup>This amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act prohibits discrimination by gender for participation in any education activity that received federal funds, including sports.

exactly as it was intended, and the designers of PERAA did not explicitly address every aspect of the structure for education governance. The result is a structure that has some ad hoc elements and leaves unaddressed some issues that the city may wish to consider.

**CONCLUSION 3-1** The city has executed most of what was called for in PERAA, and it has adapted some PERAA requirements in response to circumstances through legislative amendments and other administrative actions. The education agencies are mostly in place and carrying out their functions, but we note three problems:

1. The interagency coordination agency called for by PERAA is not in place. The goals specified for that agency are partly being addressed by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, but the range of these efforts is limited.
2. The Office of the State Superintendent of Education is not functioning effectively. The extent of OSSE's responsibility and authority are not clear and the agency has not yet established a strong reputation as an effective state education authority. We were not able to conduct a systematic evaluation of OSSE's current structure, operations, and priorities, but one is needed.
3. The District of Columbia made notable progress in collecting education data and making it publicly available during the time of this evaluation. However, the city does not have a fully operational comprehensive infrastructure for data that meets PERAA's goals or its own needs in its role as a state government, or the needs of residents, researchers, and other users. To meet these needs, D.C. should have a single online data warehouse that would allow users to examine trends over time and aggregate and disaggregate data about students and student groups, and to coordinate data collection and analysis across agencies concerned with education, justice, and human services.

**CONCLUSION 3-2** PERAA's objective of improving coordination among the Deputy Mayor for Education, the State Board of Education, and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education has not been completely met, despite efforts by these agencies. PERAA does not clearly spell out the ways in which the agencies ought to coordinate, and this lack of specificity has led to confusion and duplication of effort. Coordination among DCPS and the charter schools is also limited.

**CONCLUSION 3-3** Accountability to the public requires that information about administrative operations be transparent and easily accessible and that mechanisms be available for D.C. residents to express their preferences and concerns. Reestablishing the Office of the Ombudsman after a long hiatus was a positive step, but the budgeting process for education expenditures is neither simpler nor more transparent than it was before PERAA.

**CONCLUSION 3-4** PERAA's objective of establishing clear lines of authority has not been completely met. Because the Office of the State Superintendent of Education is situated at the same level as DCPS and the Public Charter School Board, the respective responsibilities of these agencies are not clearly distinguished. On paper, the Deputy Mayor for Education is responsible for oversight of all three, but we did not see evidence of how this oversight is carried out. No one agency has ultimate responsibility for the quality of education for all the city's public school students.

**CONCLUSION 3-5** The current governance structure for D.C.'s public schools represents a reasonable response to the requirements of PERAA. The goals that have not yet been met—regarding coordination and oversight—point to two questions for the city to consider (1) whether the current oversight structure provides sufficient monitoring of the educational opportunities provided to students attending DCPS and charter schools throughout the city and (2) how best to oversee the education of all students attending any publicly funded school.



## 4

# Improving Teacher Quality

A major purpose of the Public Education Reform Amendment Act (PERAA) was to allow education leaders to make changes that they judged would improve educational opportunities for all students in the district. Acting on this new authority, the mayor (Adrian Fenty) and the new chancellor (Michelle Rhee) placed a high priority on improving teacher quality. The chancellor and her team pursued this goal by implementing a new teacher evaluation system, IMPACT, for the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). IMPACT was intended to improve teacher quality by clarifying expectations, providing quality feedback and support, and retaining the most effective teachers.

The third part of the committee's charge was whether the strategies used by city officials in implementing PERAA were informed by evidence, of sufficient scope and quality, and implemented well. We looked in depth at DCPS's use of IMPACT to improve teacher quality because it was a prominent and early strategy adopted by DCPS. Because each charter school is an independent local education agency, the charter sector did not (and does not) have any overarching strategy to improve teacher quality (or any other factor in education). Thus, the analysis in this chapter applies almost exclusively to DCPS.

To evaluate DCPS's strategy to improve teacher quality, we address four questions:

1. Does the design of IMPACT reflect a reasonable theory of action for achieving the city's goals? Does it reflect a sound argument

- for the ways in which a teacher evaluation system would lead to improvements in teaching practices and student learning?
2. Was there a clear plan for the implementation of IMPACT? To what extent did the implementation plan reflect the theory of action behind the system? That is, was the implementation plan true to the original design?
  3. How does DCPS use the information from IMPACT to provide feedback and support to teachers and to encourage effective teachers to stay? To what extent are these uses likely to bring about the desired changes?
  4. What have been the results so far for the educator workforce?

To explore these questions we relied on several sources. First, we commissioned two papers about the research and practice on which IMPACT was based. IMPACT consists of a teaching and learning framework to guide teachers, multiple evaluations based on observations of teachers' practices and measures of student achievement, feedback and coaching mechanisms, a system of incentives (rewards and sanctions), and continuing professional development opportunities.

One paper was a review of publicly available information about the program, including guidelines and instructional materials for teachers and administrators, summaries of teacher performance data, and documentation about the ways IMPACT was to be implemented (Gitomer et al., 2014). For the most part, these materials were available on the city's websites and in published materials, but additional information was obtained directly from the DCPS Office of Human Capital. In addition, however, Gitomer and colleagues had data resources that permitted a comparison of IMPACT with teacher evaluation programs in a sample of other states.<sup>1</sup> This paper provides an in-depth review of the components of IMPACT and a comparison of the program with those in other states and with findings from relevant research.

The second paper was an assessment of one component of IMPACT, a measure of student gains on standardized achievement tests (Koedel, 2014). This measure is derived through a statistical procedure called value-added modeling (discussed below). Value-added modeling is complex and requires decisions about a number of technical issues; these decisions can affect the accuracy and stability of the results. We obtained documentation about

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<sup>1</sup>The sample covered the District of Columbia and 17 states: Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Tennessee. The data were collected as part of another evaluation being conducted by the authors. All of the data were obtained from publicly available sources, primarily available through the respective states' websites and associated reports.

the value-added procedures used for IMPACT and commissioned Koedel to review these procedures, compare them to best practices as documented in the research literature, and evaluate them in light of procedures commonly used by teacher evaluation programs in other states. This paper provides an in-depth evaluation of the city's approach to deriving teacher value-added estimates.

We also reviewed the results from two studies conducted by the Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation (DC-EdCORE).<sup>2</sup> One study examined trends in teacher retention and dismissal rates after IMPACT was implemented (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2014a); the other examined changes in student achievement associated with the dismissal of principals judged to be performing poorly (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2014b).

We supplemented this information by conducting formal interviews with three instructional superintendents. DCPS has nine instructional superintendents who each oversee a cluster of approximately 12 schools, providing guidance and leadership to principals. We sent invitations to all nine superintendents, and three responded and agreed to be interviewed.

The committee also reviewed relevant literature on the subject of teacher evaluation, including empirical research on value-added modeling, evaluations and critiques of value-added modeling procedures, empirical research and reviews of empirical research on conducting classroom observations of teachers, and articles about providing feedback and coaching to teachers.

The first section below reviews the design of IMPACT and the extent to which it represented a reasonable theory of action for achieving the city's goals. The next section considers the implementation plan for IMPACT and includes our analysis of the various components for rating teachers' effectiveness. The third section looks at the results of IMPACT to date. The fourth section discusses measures to improve principal quality. In the final section we offer our suggestions for improvements to IMPACT and other aspects of measuring and improving teacher quality in D.C.

## THE DESIGN OF IMPACT

Historically, teacher evaluation has received little attention in the United States. Although school leaders have always had the responsibility for evaluation, they spent little time in classrooms and produced very little variation in their evaluations. Teachers rarely received ratings other than satisfactory or excellent, and poor reviews tended to be given in response to professional lapses rather than poor teaching (The New Teacher Project, 2009).

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<sup>2</sup>EdCORE subcontracted this analysis to Mathematica Policy Research; we note that Mathematica was also involved in the design of IMPACT.

Over the past decade or so, a growing body of research has demonstrated that teacher quality can make a significant difference in student achievement (e.g., Rockoff, 2004; Rivkin et al., 2005; Chetty et al., 2011, 2014b; George W. Bush Institute Education Reform Initiative, 2015). At the same time, the need for improvements in teacher evaluation—a key mechanism for identifying highly qualified, highly effective teachers who are likely to improve educational outcomes for students—has received increased attention. The classroom observations typically conducted by school administrators can be subjective and imprecise, in part because they usually involve a single observer and only one or two observations, and they can be affected by factors that are unrelated to teacher effectiveness (see, e.g., Harris, 2010; Harris and Anderson, 2013; Casabianca et al., 2014; Mihaly and McCaffrey, 2014). Thus, newer approaches have focused on more uniform data collection about teacher effectiveness, using both more structured and regular observations and a statistical approach called value-added modeling (VAM). This approach makes use of student test scores to try to isolate the effect a teacher has on student learning. VAM is often viewed as more objective than classroom observations because it is based on quantifiable student outcomes, rather than on judgments about what is good teaching. However, value-added approaches also have critics, in part because they rely on standardized test scores as a measure of student outcomes and do not capture other dimensions of learning.

The design of IMPACT started in 2007, soon after Michelle Rhee was appointed chancellor of District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). The project began with a year-long, information-gathering phase that included reviews of the research and meetings with stakeholders. The second phase was to develop the structure of the evaluation system; it was led by a design team that included human capital staff and other staff who were developing the district's teaching and learning framework (see below). The design team held focus groups and sought input from teachers and other staff to develop the structure of the system (Curtis, 2011). The new evaluation system, IMPACT, was implemented in 2009.

The way in which IMPACT is intended to bring about improvements in the teaching force—that is, the underlying theory of action—is described on the DCPS website.<sup>3</sup> The system uses a three-pronged approach designed to clarify expectations, provide quality feedback and support, and retain the most effective teachers (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2014b).

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<sup>3</sup>See [http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/In+the+Classroom/Ensuring+Teacher+Success/IMPACT+\(Performance+Assessment\)/An+Overview+of+IMPACT](http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/In+the+Classroom/Ensuring+Teacher+Success/IMPACT+(Performance+Assessment)/An+Overview+of+IMPACT) [October 2014].

### Clarify Expectations

DCPS developed its own framework for characterizing effective instructional practices. DCPS officials and selected stakeholders (including parents, teachers, and community members) based their framework on a review of relevant documents developed by states and professional teaching organizations, observation protocols developed for research, teacher evaluation frameworks, and the scientific literature about research-based models for effective teaching. As they explain in a guide to the program (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2013a), D.C. school officials sought to develop a teacher practice framework that would be “a measure of instructional expertise” (p. 6) and would reflect the “school system’s definition of effective instruction, outlining key strategies which lead to increased student achievement” (p. 12).<sup>4</sup> The resulting “Teaching and Learning Framework” was designed to (p. 12):

- communicate clear performance expectations for D.C. teachers,
- provide a common language for discussing teacher practice, and
- allow for alignment of professional development to teachers’ needs.

### Provide Quality Feedback

City officials also sought to design a system in which teachers knew what was expected of them and understood the evaluation criteria. The teaching and learning framework was to be used as a means for communicating expectations as well as a guide for conducting classroom observations and providing feedback to teachers. The teaching framework was also a guide for developing the observation protocols and scoring rubrics that observers would use. The plan requires that teachers be observed multiple times during a school year and by multiple observers. To facilitate this, DCPS implemented a master educator program to recruit and train a pool of experts (teachers who have both expertise in relevant content and classroom experience) to conduct observations and provide support and mentoring to teachers. DCPS also required that observations be conducted both by school administrators and by master educators.

In addition, the city has developed a pool of instructional coaches, who provide support and feedback to teachers and the school leadership (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2014d). Coaches are tasked with analyzing data, designing professional development and support, and

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<sup>4</sup>DCPS has developed numerous guides to aspects of IMPACT. Some were provided directly to us by DCPS staff; some were obtained by Gitomer and his colleagues in preparing their commissioned paper (see above); and some were available on the DCPS website. All the guides cited in this report are available in the public access file at the National Academy of Sciences.

facilitating teacher learning. They are trained in the teaching and learning framework and are encouraged to provide professional development to teachers about the instrument's dimensions.

### Retain Effective Teachers

The district designed IMPACT to provide incentives for teachers who receive high scores to remain with D.C. schools and to give school officials the means to sanction and dismiss teachers who score poorly. The evaluations provide a means for gathering evidence to support decisions about teacher compensation and employment. Through IMPACT, various types of information are collected and used to assign teachers to one of five possible effectiveness categories: “highly effective,” “effective,” “developing,” “minimally effective,” or “ineffective.”

The incentives are primarily monetary, but they also include advances on the career ladder (discussed below) that result in new responsibilities. The two possible sanctions are salary freezes and termination of employment. Teachers who are rated highly effective receive bonuses, and those with consecutive ratings of highly effective are eligible to receive increases in their base pay. Teachers who are rated as highly effective receive additional bonuses if they work in schools where at least 60 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Teachers who are rated as ineffective in any year or as minimally effective for 2 consecutive years are dismissed. The “developing” category was added for the 2012-2013 school year. Teachers who score at this level for 3 consecutive years are also subject to dismissal [see Box 4-1].

### Components of IMPACT

IMPACT is based on two types of measures: direct observations of teachers' practices—both instructional techniques in the classroom and professional conduct outside of the classroom, and measures of gains in student learning based on achievement tests: see Table 4-1. There are three components of the direct observations:

1. evaluations of teacher practice based on observations by school administrators and other trained professionals;
2. a principal-assessed measure of the teacher's collaboration with colleagues and support of school initiatives and programs (called “commitment to the school community”); and
3. a principal-assessed measure of the teacher's attendance, adherence to school policies, and professionalism (called “core professionalism”).

**BOX 4-1**  
**Rules for Dismissal of Teachers**

- Teachers who receive a single rating of ineffective are subject to immediate dismissal.
- Teachers who receive the rating of minimally effective for 2 consecutive years are subject to dismissal.
- Teachers who receive the rating of developing for 3 consecutive years are subject to dismissal.
- Teachers who move up from minimally effective to developing have a third year to improve before being subject to dismissal. However, a principal may recommend dismissal earlier if there is additional evidence that the teacher is not improving or if performance is declining and is already below effective.

SOURCE: Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation (2014a).

**TABLE 4-1** Components of the Overall IMPACT Score and Their Associated Weights, by School Year

	Weight on Component in School Year (%)			
	2001-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
<b>Group 1: Teachers with a Value-Added Score</b>				
TLF (observation)	40	35	35	40
IVA score	50	50	50	35
CSC	5	10	10	10
TAS	—	—	—	—
CP	Deduction	Deduction	Deduction	Deduction
School value-added score	5	5	5	n.a.
<b>Group 2: Teachers Without a Value-Added Score</b>				
TLF (observation)	80	75	75	75
IVA score	—	—	—	—
CSC	5	10	10	10
TAS	10	10	10	15
CP	Deduction	Deduction	Deduction	Deduction
School value-added score	5	5	5	n.a.

NOTES: CP = core professionalism; CSC = commitment to the school community; IVA = individual value-added; TAS = teacher-assessed student achievement data; TLF = teaching and learning framework, which serves as a guide to observation protocols and rubrics; n.a. = not applicable because not in effect for the given year.

SOURCE: Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation (2014a, p. 5).

There are two measures of student learning:

1. an estimate based on statistical value-added approaches, and
2. an estimate based on data from assessments designed by teachers.

Only one measure of student learning is determined for each teacher, depending on the subject area and grade level that she or he teaches. General education teachers of math and of reading and English-language arts in grades 4 through 8 receive an “individual value-added” estimate, since standardized achievement test scores are available in these subject areas and grades.<sup>5</sup> For other teachers, an alternative measure called the “teacher-assessed student achievement” estimate is calculated. Scores on the components are weighted unequally, as shown in Table 4-1, summed, and then classified into the performance categories.

## THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

We investigated the extent to which the implementation plan for IMPACT was consistent with the city’s goals and likely to bring about the desired changes. We commissioned a paper to review the implementation instructions and guidelines (Gitomer et al., 2014). The authors examined four elements: (1) how the observations are to be conducted, (2) how student growth measures are determined, (3) how the overall scores are calculated, and (4) the types of supports and professional development opportunities offered to teachers.

### Components Based on Observations

#### Observations of Classroom Practice

DCPS uses its teaching and learning framework as the basis for observations and ratings of teachers’ practices. The framework covers three broad domains: plan, teach, and increase effectiveness. At this writing, only observations of the teach domain have been implemented: the plan and increase effectiveness domains are described in IMPACT guides, but they are not yet part of the observations and ratings. DCPS uses nine dimensions to define the teach domain, and each is scored separately during a given observation (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2013a, p. 15):

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<sup>5</sup>For 2012-2013, value-added estimates were also calculated for reading and English-language arts teachers in grades 9 and 10.

1. lead well-organized, objective-driven lessons;
2. explain content clearly;
3. engage students at all learning levels in accessible and challenging work;
4. provide students multiple ways to move toward mastery;
5. check for student understanding;
6. respond to student understanding;
7. develop higher-level understanding through effective questioning;
8. maximize instructional time; and
9. build a supportive, learning-focused classroom community.

The guidelines require that most teachers be observed five times each year, four times formally and one informally, although this varies for teachers who have previously received high ratings. The informal observation is intended to provide feedback to teachers and does not count toward the overall score. Each formal observation lasts at least 30 minutes and is unannounced. The guidelines require that a conference be held with the teacher within 15 days of an observation. For formal observations, the conference is to be followed by a full written report with scores and comments for each standard of the teach domain. Observations are conducted by school administrators, such as the principal or assistant principal, as well as by master educators, a set of experienced teachers that the city hired and trained to serve as “outside” observers.

Score distributions show that the majority of teachers receive ratings of effective or highly effective (Gitomer et al., 2014). The most recent year (2014) saw the highest proportion (69 percent) of teachers receiving those ratings. Most of the other teachers receive a rating of developing. A very small number of teachers receive the lower ratings of minimally effective or ineffective.

With regard to the guidance DCPS provides for implementing the observations, we note several positive features. The use of master educators as observers is unique among the state evaluation systems that we examined. DCPS’s choice of five observations for a summative score for early career teachers is higher than the requirements in many other states and more in line with findings from research on the point at which observation scores converge (see, e.g., Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2012). The use of multiple observers and multiple observations is in keeping with best practices identified in research (see, e.g., Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013). The provision of an informal, unscored observation for new teachers is found in many other states and is generally recognized as sound practice.

The anecdotal evidence from our interviews with instructional superintendents suggests points to consider about the implementation plan. Two

of the superintendents noted that the procedures for conducting observations and providing feedback are generally efficient and appropriate. However, one of these two said that feedback should be provided more quickly. This superintendent thought that waiting 14 days or so to give a teacher feedback on a lesson is ineffective and that “on-the-spot” feedback would be much more helpful. Both of these superintendents were critical of the kind of evidence considered, suggesting that it is too limited and should be expanded to include teachers’ lesson planning strategies and samples of student work. They both believe that teachers and students change their behavior when they know they are being observed and therefore that including a broader sampling of a teachers’ work would be beneficial.

The third superintendent noted that the focus of the observations is on pedagogy but not on rigor. That individual is supportive of IMPACT because it provides a framework for what effective instruction should look like (classroom management, questioning, differentiated instruction), but it does not address the rigor of the instruction.

The third superintendent distinguished between principals who are primarily managers, who prioritize building operations over instruction, and those who view themselves as instructional leaders whose primary role is to help teachers improve instruction. According to this superintendent, principals of the latter type are likely to be more diligent in making teacher observations and to provide more constructive feedback because they view the observations as a tool for growth.

The superintendents also discussed measures put in place to instruct and support principals. According to the third superintendent, principals and assistant principals must go through a training process to learn how to use the scoring rubrics. They are required to watch videos, submit scores, and have their scores reviewed and analyzed. There is also an IMPACT guide designed to help principals plan the timing and spacing of the observations. One superintendent indicated that this helps ensure that observations are properly spaced throughout the school year and not all done at the last minute, and it also allows principals time to write reports that contain robust evidence and identify next steps.

### **Commitment to School Community**

The measure of commitment to school community is intended to reflect the extent to which the teacher supports and collaborates with the school community. It has five dimensions:

1. support for local school initiatives,
2. support for special education and English-language-learner programs,
3. high expectations,

4. partnership with families, and
5. instructional collaboration.

Guidelines call for a school administrator (usually a principal) to conduct the commitment evaluation and assess teachers twice on all five dimensions, once before December 19 and again before the end of the school year. The two scores are averaged to yield the final score used in the evaluation rating. The scoring rubric is based on the frequency with which effective behaviors are observed; it has four levels, 1 (lowest) to 4 (highest) (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2013a, pp. 48-51).

In 2009-2010, 74 percent of teachers received a score of 3 or above. Scores have increased since then: in 2012-2013, 89 percent of teachers received a score of 3 or above. While only 1.4 percent of teachers received a score less than 2 in 2009-2010, less than 0.4 percent of teachers (only 12 of 3,294) received such a score in 2012-2013.

Measures of teaching activities outside of classroom instruction are not common in teacher evaluation systems in the United States, and none of the other 17 states examined in the paper commissioned for this evaluation includes this type of measure (Gitomer et al., 2014). Many education researchers have discussed the importance of the work teachers do outside of planned instruction, particularly interacting with families, collaborating with teachers and support staff, and supporting school improvement efforts (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 2009). Although classroom observation instruments and rubrics to assess other elements in teaching, such as lesson planning, have been a research focus for decades, comparably little research has examined how to assess and measure teacher involvement outside of classroom instruction (Gitomer et al., 2014).

Our review of guideline documents revealed no evidence of efforts to control the quality of scores on the commitment measure, either through administrator training or implementation. The rubrics are written in language that leaves considerable room for inference and is likely to be interpreted differently by administrators in different schools, and the examples provided to guide assessment are brief and limited. No documentation exists to clarify pivotal terms used in the rubric, such as “sometimes” or “effective manner.” It does not appear that there are any efforts to support the comparability of administrator scoring across the district (Gitomer et al., 2014).

### **Core Professionalism**

In addition to measuring observable classroom practice, many states have made an effort to evaluate teacher professionalism. Those evaluations generally use the same dimensions to define professionalism as those in

the commitment component of IMPACT. Other states tend to include the measure of professionalism as a part of teacher effectiveness or within a broader measure of teacher practice. The core professionalism component in IMPACT is distinguished from those elements and focuses on basic job responsibilities. Specifically, teachers are rated on the following behaviors:

1. attendance,
2. on-time arrival,
3. following policies and procedures, and
4. interacting with people in a respectful manner.

The measure of professionalism only affects a teacher's overall effectiveness score if she or he is found to be deficient in this area. There are three levels of rating for each of the four behaviors: *meets standard*; *slightly below standard*; and *significantly below standard*. The school administrator rates teachers twice annually, on a time schedule like that for the commitment measure, and ratings are based on the frequency with which certain behaviors are observed. Teachers rated as slightly or significantly below standard are subject to deductions from their total effectiveness scores, ranging from 10 to 20 points.

Most teachers' evaluation scores are not adversely affected by the professionalism measure, but deductions are not rare. As with the other measures, the overall professionalism ratings for teachers have improved over time. During the first year IMPACT was implemented (2009-2010), nearly 25 percent of all teachers had a deduction, but in 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, less than 13 percent of teachers received a deduction.

The components and ratings are described in a rubric provided in the IMPACT guidebook (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2013a). In comparison with those for the commitment measure, the professionalism measure descriptions are written in language that is much less ambiguous. For example, to meet the standard for on-time arrival, an individual must have "no unexcused late arrivals." To be classified as significantly below standard for respect, the teacher must demonstrate a pattern of failing to "interact with students, colleagues, parents/guardians, or community members in a respectful manner."

Our review of guideline documents revealed no evidence of quality controls for the scoring of this measure through training or during implementation. Scores are assigned at the discretion of the administrator.

## Measures of Student Learning

### Individual Value-Added Estimates

The individual value-added estimate is derived through a statistical procedure called value-added modeling. The procedure produces an estimate for each teacher of the value she or he added in a school year irrespective of other factors; this estimate is interpreted as a measure of the teacher's effectiveness at improving student achievement. Based on multiple regression techniques, VAM seeks to isolate a teacher's contribution to students' gains on achievement tests from other factors that have been shown to be related to academic performance but are outside the teacher's control. Those factors include poverty, attendance, and mobility among schools. There are other factors that may have an impact on student learning and are beyond the control of the teacher, but cannot be controlled statistically. These factors, which include parental and other supports for learning outside the classroom, can affect students' performance on achievement tests, but they are difficult to quantify and so cannot be factored into value-added models. Thus, for a given classroom of students, the models estimate the average gain (or loss) in test scores from one year to the next, after controlling for the outside factors that are measurable. The models use this gain or loss as a measure of teacher effectiveness.<sup>6</sup>

Before describing this component of IMPACT, we note that there is considerable disagreement about the use of students' scores on standardized tests for this purpose. Experts disagree about both the technical qualities of VAM estimates (e.g., precision and stability from year to year) and the validity and fairness of using them to evaluate teachers.

Some argue that VAM produces reliable, objective, quantified measures of a teacher's impact on student learning (e.g., Gordon et al., 2006; Glazerman et al., 2010; Hanushek and Rivkin, 2010; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2012; Kane et al., 2013; Chetty et al., 2014a). These advocates maintain that the controls included in the statistical model support interpretations that students' gains or losses are attributable to the teacher.

Others argue that there are numerous drawbacks to the use of value-added estimates—including both conceptual and technical limitations (e.g., Raudenbush, 2004; Baker et al., 2010; Rothstein, 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2012; American Statistical Association, 2014; Amrein-Beardsley, 2014; Ravitch, 2014). These critics are skeptical of the causal claims made by VAM advocates and are concerned about reducing a teacher's work to a single

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<sup>6</sup>For additional information about using VAM approaches for this purpose, see, for example, McCaffrey et al. (2003), Braun (2005), McCaffrey and Lockwood (2008), National Research Council and National Academy of Education (2010), and Harris (2011).

number, the reliability and validity of that number, and the fairness of making high-stakes employment decisions based on that number.

These differences of opinion were reflected among the experts on the committee, and we did not come to consensus on this issue. However, we think it is important to note that the revised edition of the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests* (American Educational Research Association et al., 2014) lays out guidelines for using student achievement test scores to evaluate teacher effectiveness, and it specifically states that this use requires

a validity argument should be set forth to justify inferences about [the value-added estimates] as measures of a desired outcome . . . and evidence for the appropriateness of this inference needs to be provided. (p. 210)

In D.C., as in most other states that use VAM estimates in their teacher evaluation programs, this type of validity evidence has not yet been collected.

We did not evaluate the decision to include VAM estimates in IMPACT. Instead, we focused on the ways that value-added estimates are calculated for IMPACT and the extent to which the procedures conform to the practices recommended by experience and empirical research.

The individual value-added component is estimated by modeling the current year's test scores for the teacher's students as a function of those students' previous year's scores in the same subject, controlling for the measurable factors that have an effect on student learning but are beyond the control of the teachers. Scores on the D.C. Comprehensive Assessment System (DC CAS) tests have served as the measure of achievement.<sup>7</sup> The models include both student-level factors that control for each individual's educational and background characteristics and classroom-level factors that control for contextual factors that are outside of the control of teachers. The model currently used by DCPS includes the following student-level and classroom-level control variables (Isenberg and Walsh, 2014):

Student-level factors:

- previous year's test score in the same subject (e.g., control for mathematics while assessing student scores in mathematics);
- previous year's test score in another subject (e.g., control for mathematics while assessing growth in reading);
- eligibility for free lunch;
- eligibility for reduced-price lunch;
- special education status;

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<sup>7</sup>The last administration of the DC CAS was in 2013-2014, as DCPS has completed the transition to the PARCC assessment.

- limited English proficiency status;
- attendance from the previous year; and
- an estimate of student mobility (e.g., number of times student has changed schools).

Classroom-level factors:

- the class's average test score in the same subject from the previous year;
- the standard deviation of the class's scores in the same subject from the previous year; and
- the proportion of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

The previous test score measures (average and standard deviation) are included to account for peer achievement and the dispersion of achievement within each classroom, and the free or reduced-price lunch control offers additional contextual information.

The model yields an estimate for each teacher that is converted to a percentile rank. The percentile ranks are then transformed to a scale that ranges from 1.0 to 4.0. In the original model (used through the 2010-2011 school year), teachers who scored at the 50th percentile received a scale score of 2.5. This changed in the 2011-2012 school year, and teachers who scored at the 50th percentile received a scale score of 3. Other scores are assigned relative to score at the 50th percentile, but we were not able to determine how that assignment is done. The city does not release the distributions for the individual value-added scores.

For the most part, the individual value-added estimates are calculated in ways that are used in other school systems and supported by empirical research. The statistical procedures are similar, and the student-level and classroom-level controls are similar to those discussed in the literature base on VAM (e.g., see Rivkin et al., 2005; Aaronson et al., 2007; Koedel and Betts, 2011; Sass et al., 2012; Goldhaber and Hansen, 2013; Chetty et al., 2014b).

There are a few differences between the models used by DCPS and those used in other states. D.C. includes prior-year attendance as a student-level control variable, which seems valuable but is rarely done elsewhere (Koedel, 2014). Other states include race and gender as student-level controls, and this is not done in D.C. Nevertheless, in a comprehensive study, Chetty and colleagues (2014b) found low levels of bias in the value-added models that rely on sets of control variables similar to those used in IMPACT (also see Kane and Staiger, 2008). Based on the available research evidence, the likelihood that teachers' value-added estimates are significantly biased because insufficient student-level control variables are small.

In D.C., a single year's value-added estimate is used in determining

a teacher's overall IMPACT score. Using a single value-added estimate is appealing because performance in previous years is not counted in a teacher's current evaluation score. However, research shows that including two or more years of value-added estimates improves both the precision and the stability of the estimates from one year to the next (McCaffrey et al., 2009; Koedel and Betts, 2011; Schochet and Chiang, 2013). Thus, there is a tradeoff between the benefits of using current data to estimate teachers' value-added scores and using data for multiple years for stability. It may be optimal to use 2 or more years of value-added data for teachers when possible, perhaps weighting the years unequally so that recent performance is emphasized.

Until 2011-2012, IMPACT included an estimate of the value added by each school. The school value-added estimate was included in determining the overall rating for all teachers in a school, whether or not an individual value-added estimate was calculated for all of the teachers. The purpose of calculating a value-added estimate for a school was that it provided an incentive for teamwork: that is, if test scores improved for the school, all teachers in the school benefitted. The city discontinued the school value-added estimate in 2012-2013, but we did not find any documentation for this decision. Many states use this estimate, and it is not clear why the city decided to eliminate it.

### Teacher-Assessed Student Achievement Scores

As we note above, an individual value-added score cannot be calculated for all teachers. For the teachers for whom a value-added score is not calculated, DCPS calculates a teacher-assessed student achievement score, as is done in some other states (often called student learning objectives). DCPS documents provide guidelines for calculating this score: the teacher and administrator or evaluator (school principal or assistant principal) decide on specific learning growth goals for a given class of students, and the teacher must show evidence that the students achieved those goals. The learning goals, assessments, scoring, relative weights (if multiple assessments are used), and evaluation criteria are all negotiated between the teacher and the administrator in the fall of the school year.

The requirements for this measure state that "Assessments must be rigorous, aligned to the DCPS content standards, and approved by your school administration" (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2013a, p. 42). D.C. also publishes guidance materials to recommend assessments and goals for certain grades and subject areas (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2011). The recommendations include the use of specific, commercially available assessments, as well as suggestions for teachers to create assessments, projects, performance tasks, and portfolios. Many suggestions for

specific subjects and grades include multiple assessments that target different instructional goals.

The guidelines call for the administrator to approve the scoring targets for the students and for the class as a whole. Also, the teacher and administrator agree on the criteria on which the teacher will be scored at the end of the year. Teachers must present the evidence of the students' achievement to the administrator, and the administrator must verify the evidence and assign a score by the last day of school. Teachers are scored on a 4-point scale that characterizes their students' learning as "little," "some," "significant," and "exceptional." If scores cannot be validated or the assessments used were not approved initially, a teacher receives the lowest score.

The majority of teachers receive a score of 3 or higher (54 percent in 2009-2010 and 76 percent in 2012-2013). Since the use of this measure was implemented, scores have been increasing overall, and the percentage of teachers with very low scores (lower than 2) has been decreasing. Approximately 10 percent of teachers scored lower than 2 until 2012-2013, when the percentage dropped to 6.4 percent.

The teacher-assessed student achievement component in IMPACT is similar to assessments of student learning objectives used in other states when test score data are not available for groups of teachers. However, D.C. collects no systematic information about the quality of its scores. There are no explicit standards of quality and no systematic mechanisms to review teachers' scoring of student work or principals' evaluations of the teachers' scoring. This lack of quality control for these locally developed measures is not unique to IMPACT. This lack is typical in systems that rely on teachers and principals to develop individual goals, which need not be comparable across classrooms. However, we note that several states that use student learning objectives have significantly more quality control: they require specific assessments for their student learning objectives so that students' performances can be compared across grades and subjects.

The quality of the teacher-assessed student achievement measure is unexamined, but a related issue is that it is almost totally dependent on the collective judgment and implementation of individual teachers and administrators. Although D.C. does review all goals used in the measure, it is only to "ensure they are workable" (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2011, p. 2). The city does not provide examples of acceptable locally developed requirements for the measure and assessments, which contrasts with the kinds of supports for student learning objectives measures that have been developed by other states (Gitomer et al., 2014).

### Overall Effectiveness Score

In IMPACT, the component scores are weighted and summed to produce an overall score that is used to place the teacher into one of five effectiveness categories. The weights differ depending on whether a teacher has an individual value-added score or not (see Table 4-1, above). For teachers with an individual value-added score (group 1 in the table) that score and the classroom observation score receive the most weight, and the weights are roughly equal (e.g., for the first year, the individual value-added score was weighted by 50 and the classroom observation score by 40). In contrast, for teachers without an individual value-added score (group 2 on the table), the classroom observation score is weighted much higher than any of the other components (e.g., for the first year, this score was weighted by 80).<sup>8</sup>

Several observations can be made about the values shown the table. First, the majority of teachers in the school system fall into group 2 because assessment data are not available to calculate an individual value-added score. For this group, DCPS has chosen to strongly emphasize the classroom observation score, which accounts for 80 percent of the overall score. There is a public perception that IMPACT consists only of VAM, but in fact, the majority of teachers do not have an individual value-added score, and for those that do, its weight is nearly equal to the classroom observation score.

Second, there have been modifications in how specific measures are implemented and how they contribute to the final score (Isenberg and Hock, 2012). For instance, as shown in Table 4-1, there have been numerous changes in the weights assigned to the component scores.<sup>9</sup> The changes have been substantive enough to render the overall IMPACT scores incomparable from one year to the next. When examining trends in teacher effectiveness ratings, it is impossible to determine the extent to which average gains or losses are the result of improved teacher practices or the result of changes in the way that effectiveness ratings are determined. We note that the city decided to launch a full-scale implementation of IMPACT and then make modifications as needed, rather than begin with smaller pilot implementations. While this is a reasonable approach, it confounds attempts to examine trend data for evaluation purposes. There were no data that might allow comparisons across years (e.g., recalculating prior component scores using the new weights—or vice versa—solely for research purposes), and we could not find documentation of the rationale for the various changes.

An additional change will occur during the 2014-2015 school year because DCPS has adopted the Common Core State Standards and is

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<sup>8</sup>In all, the city defines eight groups, based on teaching assignments. The numbers of teachers in groups 3-8 are small, and we did not focus on them.

<sup>9</sup>The city decided to launch a full-scale implementation of IMPACT and then make modifications as needed, rather than begin with smaller pilot implementations.

transitioning to a test designed to measure these standards (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers [PARCC]; see Chapter 3). The individual value-added component will not be calculated because in the first year of a new testing program, there are no achievement data on which to calculate student gains or losses. We did not find any information about the city's plans for subsequent school years, once multiple years of achievement data on PARCC become available.

### Effectiveness Categories

Once the overall scores are calculated, teachers are assigned to a final performance classification (discussed above). Initially, DCPS used four performance levels:

- highly effective (350–400)
- effective (250–349)
- minimally effective (200–249)
- ineffective (100–199)

A fifth performance level, developing, was added in 2012-2013, with the resulting change in the scores for two of the categories:

- highly effective (350–400)
- effective (300–349)
- developing (250-299)
- minimally effective (200–249)
- ineffective (100–199)

This change made obtaining a rating of effective slightly more difficult for teachers. In the original classification, teachers needed to earn at least 63 percent of the total possible points to reach the effective level. With the new classification, teachers must earn at least 75 percent of possible points to achieve the effective level. At the same time, a rating of developing carries consequences for teachers (who can be dismissed if they receive that rating for 3 consecutive years).

The majority of teachers have received ratings of highly effective or effective. Table 4-2 shows the ratings of teachers from 2009-2010 to 2012-2013. The percentages at that level ranged from 85 to 90 percent in the first 3 years and dropped to 75 percent in 2012-2013, when the category of developing was added.

It is also useful to compare the percentages at each rating level for teachers who fall into group 1 or group 2. We obtained data that supported this comparison for the 2009-2010 school year. For group 1 teachers (those

**TABLE 4-2** Percentage of Teachers in Each Effectiveness Category, by School Year

Category	School Year			
	2009-2010	2010- 2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Highly Effective	16	14	22	30
Effective	69	70	68	45
Developing				19
Minimally Effective	14	14	9	5
Ineffective	2	2	1	1

NOTE: Results across years are not strictly comparable because of ongoing changes in the components, the ways they are scored, and weights applied to them.

SOURCE: Data from Gitomer et al. (2014).

with an individual value-added score), 68.8 percent received ratings of effective or highly effective, and 28.2 percent received ratings of minimally effective or ineffective. For group 2 (those with only a teacher-assessed student achievement score), 87.3 percent were rated effective or highly effective, and 12.7 were rated minimally effective or ineffective (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2013a, p. 32, Table 1).

One of the ward superintendents noted that while most teachers are rated at higher levels, he or she did not see commensurate increases in student learning. Another ward superintendent observed that the primary focus so far has been on teachers with the lower ratings (minimally effective or ineffective teachers), not on continuing to improve performance for teachers who are rated effective.

### Feedback and Support

An important goal the designers set for IMPACT was to provide feedback and support to teachers. IMPACT guidelines describe two mechanisms for accomplishing this goal: instructional coaches and ongoing professional development. Guidelines indicate that teachers who have a rating of developing or lower are the primary focus of this component of the system. The IMPACT guide indicates that “DCPS will encourage principals and instructional coaches to prioritize these teachers for professional development in an effort to help them improve their skills and increase student achievement” (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2013a, p. 64).

### **Instructional Coaches**

According to the guidelines, instructional coaches should have at least 3 years of “successful” classroom teaching and should be qualified for a teaching certificate in the city. Instructional coaches are to be relieved from their regular teaching responsibilities so they can focus on developing coaching plans to work with teachers and school leaders to facilitate understanding of new DCPS initiatives (including IMPACT and implementation of the Common Core State Standards). They are also expected to conduct classroom observations and collect relevant artifacts to analyze teacher practice and help foster teachers’ abilities to improve.

Instructional coaches are also subject to evaluation, which is based on a statement of instructional coach standards that contains six dimensions (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2013c). The dimensions are Analyze Data Prior to the Learning Cycle; Analyze Data During the Learning Cycle; Design Support; Implement Support; Demonstrate Teacher and Student Growth; and Facilitate Adult Learning. Each instructional coach is evaluated four times a year, twice by a school administrator and twice by a member of the DCPS district office.

Although implementation plans noted that schools should have at least one instructional coach, we learned from our interviews that the availability of coaches at DCPS schools varies: some have one or more coaches but others have none. One superintendent told us that school principals decide whether or not to have one and must pay for them out of their budgets. Principals may decide to hire an assistant principal, a dean of students, a social worker, or other staff instead of an instructional coach, but these choices are generally guided by the cluster superintendent. The instructional coaches and the professional development that they provide are managed by DCPS’s Office of Teaching and Learning. They generally focus on content, depending on the particular focus of a school. A coach does not necessarily focus on issues related to IMPACT results.

### **Professional Development**

A number of resources are available to assist teachers in their professional learning and for instructional coaches to use in helping teachers meet their professional growth objectives. These resources include (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2012)

- professionally produced lesson videos from DCPS classrooms;
- curricular supports for the Common Core State Standards;
- a professional development planner, an online catalog of professional development opportunities;

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- educator portal, an online platform to connect colleagues and resources;
- support for teachers focused on students with special needs, those working in STEM (science, technology, engineering, or mathematics), or those teaching International Baccalaureate classes; and
- the Washington Teachers' Union resources.

Most of these resources are accessible online, which allows teachers to choose if and when to use them. However, there is no mechanism for tracking how often these resources are used and if they are effective in improving practices. Principals and instructional coaches are encouraged to give priority attention for professional development to teachers who score below effective.

### HOW DCPS USES INFORMATION FROM IMPACT

The city designed IMPACT so that the teachers' overall scores and ratings could be used to support a number of critical employment decisions. Annual performance determines the extent to which teachers can advance on the DCPS career ladder, and advances can lead to additional compensation as well as a reduction in the number of classroom observations required.<sup>10</sup> Also, teachers rated as highly effective may choose to participate in additional leadership opportunities. Low performance ratings result in a range of employment sanctions. Teachers receiving a rating lower than effective have their salaries frozen by not advancing a step on the base salary scale.

#### Professional Advancement

Through the Leadership Initiative for Teachers (LIFT) Program, the district has developed a career ladder that provides a series of advances for teachers. The career ladder consists of five steps—teacher and established, advanced, distinguished, and expert teacher—and progress is based on a combination of experience and positive evaluation ratings, with specific requirements for moving from one level to the next: see Table 4-3. To advance on the ladder, teachers have to receive consecutive high ratings. For example, the two highly effective ratings that are needed to progress from advanced to distinguished have to be obtained in consecutive years. Guidelines specify that movement occurs in one direction only—teachers

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<sup>10</sup>We note that DCPS received significant external funding to support the development of IMPACT and the financial supports it has offered to teachers; however, DCPS no longer relies on external funding to support the program.

**TABLE 4-3** LIFT Career Ladder: Requirements for Advancement

Level	Requirements to Obtain
Teacher	None
Established Teacher	One highly effective or two effective ratings
Advanced Teacher	One highly effective or two effective ratings
Distinguished Teacher	Two highly effective ratings
Expert Teacher	Two highly effective ratings

NOTE: When multiple higher ratings are required to move to a different level, they must be in consecutive years.

SOURCE: Data provided to the committee by DCPS.

can move up the ladder, but they do not move backward if subsequent annual ratings are lower. Teachers also need to advance through each rung of the ladder. Two highly effective ratings are needed to become distinguished, and then two additional highly effective ratings would be needed to become expert.

According to the guide (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2014d), as teachers move up the career ladder, they become eligible for additional leadership opportunities, including the ability to participate as curriculum writers, receive policy fellowships, and help recruit and select new teachers for the school system. Teachers at advanced LIFT levels may also be formally observed less frequently.<sup>11</sup>

## Compensation

Teachers receiving a rating lower than effective have their salaries frozen by not advancing a step on the base salary scale. DCPS has chosen to compensate teachers who receive high performance ratings in two ways: base salary increases and single-year bonuses, a plan that was negotiated between DCPS and the Washington Teachers' Union. These financial incentives vary, depending on a teacher's position on the LIFT career ladder, school assignment (the rewards vary depending on the level of poverty and academic achievement in the school), and whether the teacher has an individual value-added score or a teacher-assessed student achievement score.

Base salary increases are awarded as follows (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2013b):

<sup>11</sup>DCPS also formed a partnership in 2012 with the Georgetown University McDonough School of Business to provide a 13-month master's program for DCPS principals; see <http://msb.georgetown.edu/programs/executive/eml-dcps> [February 2015].

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- advanced teacher: an added 2 years' service credit for base salary;
- distinguished teacher: an added 5 year's further service credit for base salary and automatically moved to the master's degree base salary band if not there;
- expert teacher: an added 5 years' further service credit for base salary, and automatically moved to the Ph.D. base salary band.

The second component of the compensation structure is the IMPACT-plus program. Teachers who receive ratings of highly effective qualify for annual bonuses that are separate from their base salary compensation. Annual bonuses range from \$2,000 to \$25,000. Teachers who work part time, are dismissed for disciplinary reasons, or resign at the end of the school year are not eligible for the bonus program. The bonus awards are shown in Table 4-4.

A key stipulation for receiving the bonus is that teachers must cede their contractual right to what is referred to as the "extra year" or other buyout options. DCPS teachers who lose their teaching positions in a school have the right to look for a position in another school for the next school year, with full compensation and benefits. Teachers who are eligible for IMPACTplus bonuses must agree to waive this option in order to receive the additional compensation. During the first year of IMPACTplus, 63.7 percent of eligible teachers accepted the bonus; since that time, acceptance rates have increased, to 78.6 percent in 2010-2011, 80.9 percent in 2011-2012, and 81.5 percent in 2012-2013.

## RESULTS FOR THE EDUCATOR WORKFORCE

We reviewed the changes in the effectiveness ratings of the teacher workforce, as defined by IMPACT, since the program was implemented.

**TABLE 4-4** Structure of Bonus Awards for IMPACTplus

School Type	Teacher Group	
	Group 1 <sup>a</sup>	Group 2 <sup>b</sup>
40 Lowest Performing	\$25,000	\$20,000
FRL Rate 60% or Higher	\$15,000	\$10,000
FRL Rate Less than 59%	\$3,000	\$1,000

NOTE: FRL, eligible for free and reduced-price lunches.

<sup>a</sup>Teachers with a value-added score; see text for discussion.

<sup>b</sup>Teachers without a value-added score; see text for discussion.

SOURCE: Data provided to the committee by DCPS.

We examined the distributions of performance ratings for teachers who stay with the system, are dismissed, leave voluntarily, and who are newly hired. The design of IMPACT was premised on the idea that the performance ratings combined with the incentive structure (rewards and sanctions) would lead to increases in the overall quality of the teaching force. That is, the financial bonuses should have provided the incentive for highly effective teachers to remain in DCPS, while the mandatory dismissal of teachers with low performance ratings should have removed the low-performing teachers. In addition, the threat of dismissal under IMPACT may have led low-performing teachers to voluntarily leave DCPS, even though they were eligible to remain.

We note, however, an important caveat in the analysis in this section and in interpreting the data. Although the results show trends in teacher effectiveness ratings since IMPACT was implemented, these trend data do not provide conclusive evidence on whether IMPACT has been successful in meeting its goals, and they do not isolate its effects on students or educators. The implementation of IMPACT coincided with numerous other policy changes that may have affected teachers' decisions to stay or leave. Furthermore, it is not possible to measure changes in effectiveness before and after IMPACT because there were no teacher effectiveness ratings prior to IMPACT.

Our analysis was based primarily on two sources. One is a descriptive analysis of the performance ratings of teachers who stay, leave, are dismissed, or newly hired.<sup>12</sup> This analysis was summarized in the third DC-EdCORE report (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2014a). The second is a statistical analysis that compared the retention and performance outcomes among low-performing teachers whose ratings placed them near the threshold for the possibility of dismissal (Dee and Wyckoff, 2013). This study also compared the outcomes among high-performing teachers whose rating placed them near a threshold that would result in financial rewards.

### Dismissal Rates

Table 4-5 provides data on the status of teachers with low performance ratings over the 4 years we studied. In the first year (2009-2010), 1.8 percent of teachers were rated as ineffective, and all were dismissed. In the second year (2010-2011), 1.7 percent of teachers were rated ineffective, and

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<sup>12</sup>It is important to point out that these data on the effectiveness ratings of teachers who stay, leave, or are newly hired cannot be interpreted in a causal way. That is, it is not possible to attribute any observed changes directly to IMPACT or PERAA alone, because numerous factors affect teachers' decisions to stay or leave. Further, no data on teacher effectiveness are available pre-PERAA, so there are no ratings to serve as baseline information.

**TABLE 4-5** Dismissals of Teachers in DCPS, by School Year

Reason for Dismissal	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Ineffective	1.8%	1.7%	1.0%	1.3%
Minimally Effective in 2 Consecutive Years	n.a.	3.8%	1.5%	1.0%
Total	1.8%	5.5%	2.5%	2.3%
Number of Teachers Dismissed	62	182	83	76
Total Number of Teachers	3,378	3,315	3,270	3,264

NOTE: The percentages and counts in the first three columns reflect teachers who were dismissed; those in the final column reflect teachers who were eligible for dismissal. In the first 3 years, DCPS dismissed all teachers who were eligible for dismissal.

SOURCE: Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation (2014a, p. 7).

3.8 percent had been rated minimally effective for 2 consecutive years; this produced a dismissal rate of 5.5 percent. The dismissal rate declined in the next 2 years to 2.5 percent in 2011-2012 and to 2.3 percent in 2012-2013. Over the 4 years, a total of 403 teachers were dismissed out of a total of about 3,300 teachers (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2014a).

### Overall Retention and Leaving Rates

Figure 4-1 shows the percentage of teachers who left DCPS, comparing teachers who met criteria for dismissal and teachers who left despite being eligible to remain.<sup>13</sup> Many more teachers have chosen to leave DCPS than were dismissed: 15.5 percent left at the end of 2009-2010 and 16.9 percent at the end of 2011-2012. The portion of teachers being dismissed under IMPACT was higher than the portion dismissed under the previous system (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2014a).

To evaluate changes in the overall quality of the DCPS teaching force (as measured by IMPACT), we examined the effectiveness ratings of teachers who left and those who stayed. Figure 4-2 shows retention rates by IMPACT effectiveness category for 2009-2010 through 2011-2012.

As the figure shows, over 80 percent of teachers classified as highly effective or effective chose to stay with DCPS. The retention rate among teachers just in the highly effective category was 89 percent and did not change over the 3 years. The retention rate for teachers in the effective cat-

<sup>13</sup>Teachers were considered to have left DCPS if they did not receive an IMPACT rating in the following year.

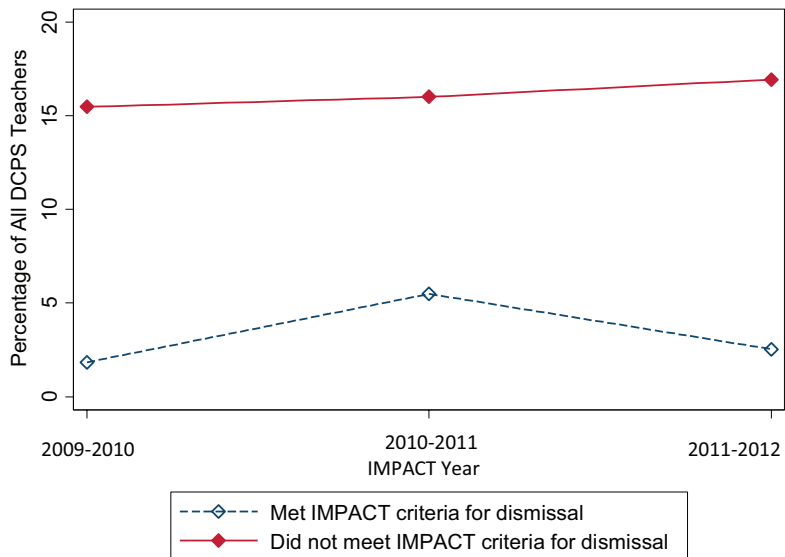


FIGURE 4-1 Percentage of teachers who left DCPS, by dismissal criteria eligibility and school year.

SOURCE: Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation (2014a, p. 7).

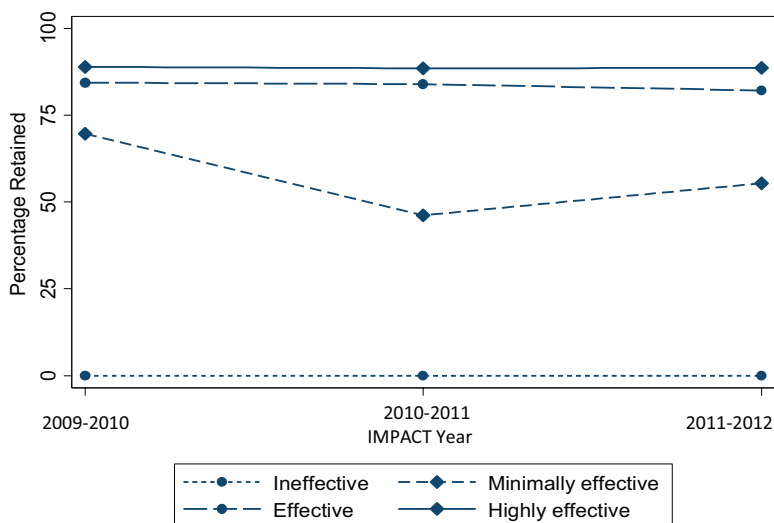


FIGURE 4-2 Retention rates of teachers in DCPS, by effectiveness category and school year.

SOURCE: Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation (2014a, p. 9).

egory ranged from 82 to 84 percent. These retention rates are in contrast with much lower rates for minimally effective teachers.

### Retention and Leaving Rates by School

It is also useful to examine teacher retention rates by school. There may be important differences in the rates at which schools retain the most effective teachers that could lead to inequities across schools. To explore this, the analysts (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2014b) first grouped the retention rates into four ranges: 0 to 40 percent, 40 to 60 percent, 60 to 80 percent, and 80 to 100 percent. Then, they determined the percentage of schools whose rates fell into each of these ranges and compared them for the year before IMPACT was implemented (2008-2009) and the 3 years after it was implemented (2009-2010 through 2011-2012); see Figure 4-3.

As the figure shows, in the pre-IMPACT year, all schools had a retention rate of at least 40 percent, and most schools (about 50 percent) had a retention rate in the 60-80 percent range. In the years since IMPACT was implemented, the distribution has shifted, with decreases in the two lowest categories (schools retaining 0-40 percent and 40-60 percent of teachers) as

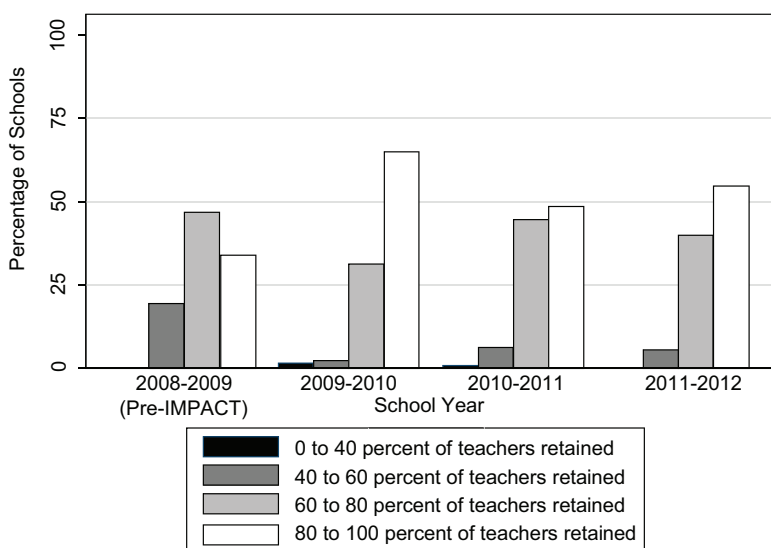


FIGURE 4-3 Teacher retention rates for all DCPS schools, school year.  
SOURCE: Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation (2014a, p. 11).

well as increases in the highest category (schools retaining 80-100 percent of teachers).

Figure 4-4 shows similar data by school but includes only teachers who received an IMPACT rating of effective or highly effective. For 2009-2010 through 2011-2012, more than two-thirds of schools retained at least 80 percent of the most effective teachers (78 percent in year 2009-2010, 74 percent in 2010-2011, and 68 percent in 2011-2012). In contrast, only a small number of schools had retention rates lower than 60 percent; we had no information on the characteristics of these schools.

### Effectiveness of Entry and Exit Cohorts

The EdCORE researchers also compared the eventual effectiveness ratings of newly hired teachers with those for teachers who left DCPS. This analysis is complicated by the fact that DCPS made changes to the weights for each component from year to year and thus the overall scores and the way they are assigned to performance levels cannot be directly compared. To compensate for this problem, the researchers created a “core” group of teachers, and, for each year, the effectiveness levels of the entry and exit cohorts were compared to this core group.

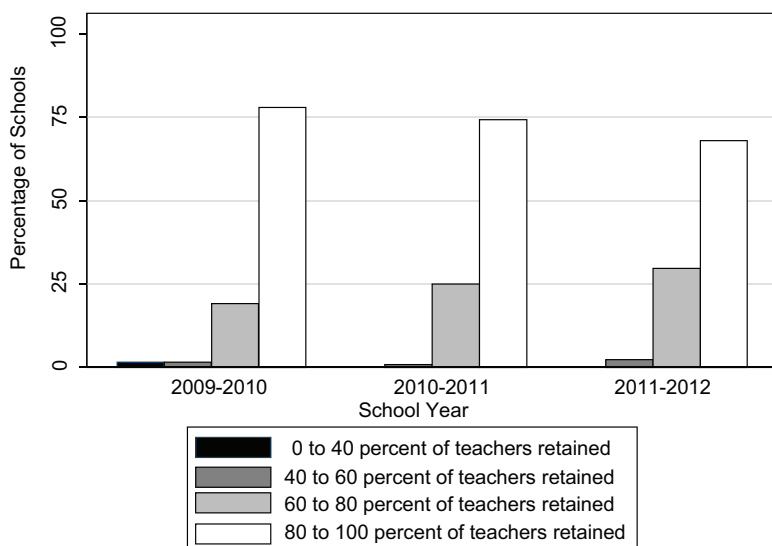


FIGURE 4-4 Schoolwide retention rates of effective and highly effective DCPS teachers, by school year.

SOURCE: Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation (2014a, p. 12).

The core group consisted of 1,342 teachers who remained in DCPS from 2008-2009 through 2012-2013.<sup>14</sup> The difference in IMPACT scores was then calculated for the core group and compared with teachers who entered or left DCPS. A positive difference would indicate that, on average, entering or leaving teachers had higher IMPACT scores than the core group; a negative difference would indicate that, on average, entering or leaving teachers had lower IMPACT scores than the core group.

The results of this comparison are presented in Table 4-6. The first row shows the differences in IMPACT scores for newly hired teachers in their first year with DCPS in comparison with the core group. As a group, new hires were less effective than core teachers by a similar amount in all 4 years. Across the 4 years shown, newly hired teachers obtained IMPACT scores that were, on average, between 26 and 33 points lower than those of the core group (row 1).

The next three rows in the table show similar information for the teachers who left, broken out for those who met the criteria for dismissal and those who did not. Across the 4 years, teachers who left obtained IMPACT scores that were, on average, between 36 and 50 points lower than the core group: those who left because they met the criteria for dismissal had IMPACT scores ranging from 115 to 165 points below the core group; those who left for other reasons were more similar to the core group, with scores ranging from 23 to 34 points lower than the core group.

These data show that, on the basis of overall IMPACT scores, teachers who were dismissed from DCPS were less effective than the new hires while teachers leaving voluntarily were approximately as effective as the new hires.

### Effectiveness Ratings by Location and Socioeconomic Status

There is a substantial body of research showing that students in the highest-poverty schools tend to be taught by the least experienced and qualified teachers (Sass et al., 2012; Lankford et al., 2002). Because of the significant disparities in income level across the wards in D.C., it is important to examine the extent to which students in all wards have equal access to high-quality teachers. The EdCORE researchers examined this issue, looking specifically at the following:

- the extent to which teachers' IMPACT scores vary by ward and, if so, the trends in these differences over time;

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<sup>14</sup>The same teachers were included in the core comparison group in each year so that changes in the gaps over time are more likely to reflect changes in the effectiveness of entry and exit cohorts rather than changes in the identity of teachers in the core comparison group.

**TABLE 4-6** Trends in IMPACT Scores of Teachers Who Entered or Left DCPS Compared with Core Group of Teachers Who Stayed

	Gap in IMPACT Scores Relative to a Core Group of Teachers			
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Entering Teachers (in their first year in DCPS)	-30*	-30*	-33*	-26*
Leavers (in their last year in DCPS)	-47*	-50*	-36*	n.a.
Met criteria for dismissal <sup>a</sup>	-165*	-115*	-126*	n.a.
Did not meet criteria for dismissal	-34*	-28*	-23*	n.a.
Core Teachers <sup>b</sup>	1,342	1,342	1,342	1,342
Entering Teachers	1,135	521	640	525
Leaving Teachers	585	713	637	n.a.

NOTES: A negative difference indicates that teachers in the subgroup had lower IMPACT scores on average than teachers in the core group. An asterisk (\*) indicates the difference is statistically significant at the 5 percent level.

<sup>a</sup>Under IMPACT, teachers who earn an ineffective rating in 1 year or a minimally effective rating for 2 consecutive years are dismissed. Teachers could be dismissed for consecutive minimally effective ratings beginning in their second year.

<sup>b</sup>Core teachers are teachers in DCPS for all 5 school years from 2008-2009 to 2012-2013. SOURCE: Data from the Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation (2014a, p. 15).

- the extent to which teachers' IMPACT scores vary across schools with different concentrations of relatively poor students and, if so, the trends in these differences over time; and
- the extent to which IMPACT scores vary in any one ward across schools with different concentrations of students in poverty.

The analysis focused on data for the years 2009-2010 through 2012-2013, comparing the average IMPACT scores obtained by teachers in each ward. For the analysis, the EdCORE researchers used eligibility for free and reduced-price lunch as a measure of socioeconomic status (SES) and grouped schools into three categories on the basis of the percentage of students in the school who qualified for those lunches. High-SES schools were those with fewer than 75 percent of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunches; medium-SES schools were those with 75 to 85 percent of students qualifying for the lunches; and low-SES schools were those with more than 85 percent of the students qualifying.

The results showed that average IMPACT scores varied considerably across the wards (see Figure 4-5) and that the gaps remained fairly consistent across time (see Figure 4-6).

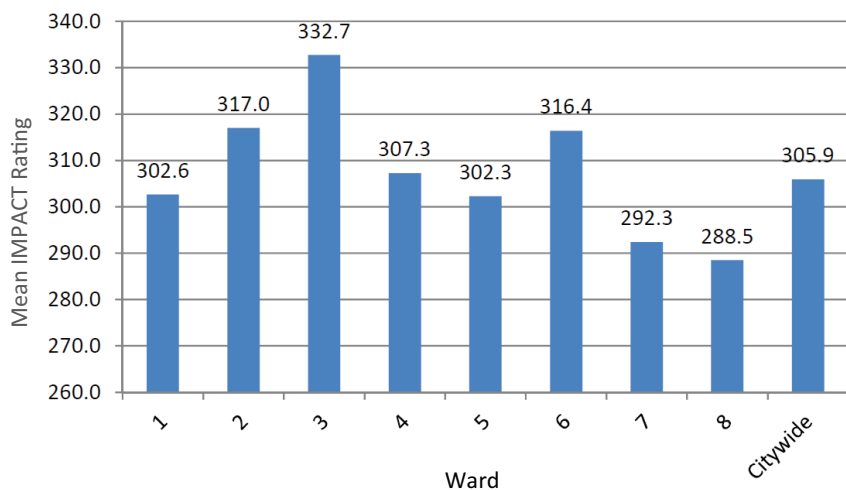


FIGURE 4-5 Mean IMPACT scores for teachers averaged across 4 school years 2009-2010 through 2012-2013, citywide and by ward.  
SOURCE: Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation (2014a, p. 24).

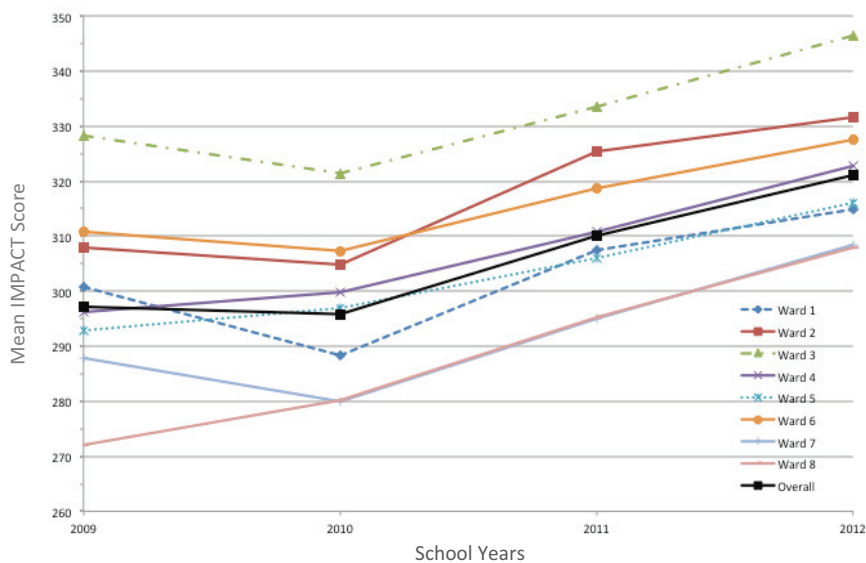


FIGURE 4-6 Mean IMPACT scores for teachers citywide and by ward, 2009-2010 through 2012-2013.  
SOURCE: Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation (2014a, p. 25).

IMPACT scores decreased between 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 for all wards and then increased from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013. The differences among the wards mostly persisted, and the ward averages were rank ordered similarly across the years, though there were a few changes.

The analysis also showed that the lowest-income students tend to have teachers with the lowest IMPACT scores, and this relationship persists even when average IMPACT scores are compared across the schools within a single ward. Figure 4-7 shows the average IMPACT scores for schools in each category, illustrating the negative relationship between the concentration of students in poverty and the average effectiveness of their teachers.

The data also highlight the stark differences in the concentration of poverty across wards that we discuss in Chapter 2. For example, all the schools in Ward 3 were classified as high-SES schools; after the 2011-2012 school year, there were no high-SES schools in Ward 7. The disparities are not decreasing, the analysis showed. The average IMPACT scores for teachers in low- and medium-SES schools have consistently been 24 to 30 points lower than for those for teachers in the highest-SES schools. In other words, the data show an association between high concentrations of poverty and low IMPACT scores, although this analysis does not permit causal inferences. One possible explanation is that high-poverty schools are not able to attract teachers with the highest IMPACT ratings (i.e., teachers

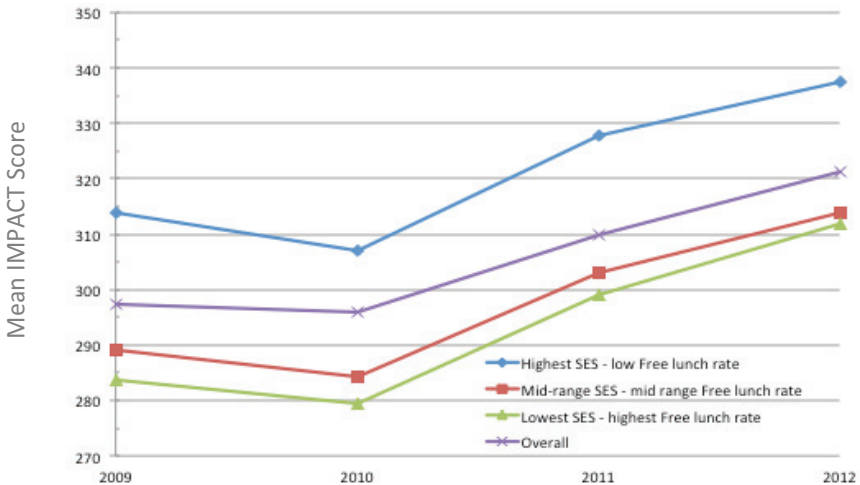


FIGURE 4-7 Mean IMPACT scores for teachers by school-level socioeconomic status, for 2009-2010 through 2012-2013.

SOURCE: Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation (2014a, p. 27).

who score highly have more employment options and choose not to work in high-poverty schools). It is also possible that IMPACT disproportionately favors teachers who work in more affluent wards or schools where students may be more likely to behave well when their teacher is being observed. A recent study showing that classroom observation scores are more biased than individual value-added scores provides some support for this hypothesis (Whitehurst et al., 2014).

We note that in response to a recent U.S. Department of Education requirement,<sup>15</sup> the Office of the State Superintendent of Education is developing a plan to increase the number of high-quality teachers in high-poverty schools (Chandler, 2015b).

### Teacher Behavior

Dee and Wyckoff (2013) evaluated the extent to which teacher behavior was affected by the rewards and sanctions built into the IMPACT system. Their analysis was designed to explore the possibility that small changes in ratings lead to large changes in incentives and sanctions—that is, the hypothesis that small (possibly inconsequential) changes in IMPACT scores at certain key places on the score distribution lead to very different consequences for the teacher (e.g., dismissal versus financial rewards).

The analysis focused on two sets of teachers, those whose IMPACT scores placed them on the cusp between minimally effective and effective and those whose scores placed them on the cusp between effective and highly effective. Scoring at either side of these cusps in 1 year carries consequences for the subsequent year. That is, teachers who scored minimally effective in 2 consecutive years are dismissed, so teachers who score very close to the dividing score between minimally effective and effective have to improve their performance or face dismissal. At the other end of the spectrum, teachers who score at the highly effective level receive financial rewards and significant increases if rated highly effective for 2 consecutive years, so teachers who score near that cusp have a strong incentive to improve their performance, and teachers who score in the highly effective category have a strong incentive to remain in that category. The analyses examined teachers' behavior when faced with these consequences and rewards.

The findings from this study suggest that the incentive structure of IMPACT is affecting teachers' decisions. The researchers reported two primary findings about teacher retention. First, teachers facing a dismissal threat were more likely to leave voluntarily. There was a drop in teacher retention at the score that separates minimally effective and effective

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<sup>15</sup>See <http://apps.washingtonpost.com/g/documents/local/letter-from-education-secretary-arne-duncan-to-chief-state-school-officers/1107/> [February 2015].

teachers. Second, retention was higher among higher-performing teachers. The retention rate for those who scored near the threshold between effective and highly effective was roughly 90 percent. For teachers just at or above this threshold, retention was higher by about 3 percentage points.

With respect to teacher performance, they found that teachers who initially received a rating of minimally effective improved their performance, on average by 10 points. The authors note that this is consistent with the hypothesis that previously low-performing teachers who remained despite the dismissal threat undertook steps to improve their performance. Dee and Wyckoff also found that teachers who were initially rated at or above the highly effective threshold and would receive a large financial bonus if rated this way again increased their scores, by roughly 10 percentage points. Again, this is consistent with the hypothesis that the financial reward will provide an incentive for teachers to continue to perform well.

### PRINCIPAL QUALITY

Along with the implementation of a program to improve teacher quality, Chancellor Rhee also sought to improve principal quality. One of her first reforms was to replace school principals who were performing poorly, as measured by their students' achievement on standardized tests. After Rhee's first year (2007-2008), 39 percent of the principals in the school district, a total of 59 individuals, left the system; about half of these departures were intentional dismissals by Rhee (Turque, 2008).

DC-EdCORE researchers examined the relationships between these dismissals and student achievement by measuring the extent to which students in a school with a new principal performed better on standardized tests than would have been expected if the original principal had been retained. These analyses were based on VAM procedures that produced an estimate of the value added by the school (see Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2014b, Apps. A, B). These procedures isolate the school's contribution to student achievement from the contributions of factors that are outside the control of the school, including background characteristics of students. By comparing a school's value added before and after a principal was replaced, this approach can isolate achievement gains attributable to a principal from those attributable to other school-level factors.

The researchers found that schools with new principals tended to have statistically significantly higher scores in reading. The average student's reading scores increased by 4 percentile points in comparison with their expected performance with the original principal. However, these gains were not evident until the new principal's third year with the school. A similar pattern was found for math, although not as strong.

The gains were larger and statistically significant for students in

grades 6-8 for both subjects after 2 years with the new principal. The average student's performance in those grades increased by 9 percentile points in math and 8 percentiles in reading (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2014b, p. 2).

These findings suggest that higher achievement test gains were associated with the hiring of new principals. But, as with estimating the value added by a teacher, estimates of the value added by the school may be confounded by factors that cannot be quantified or controlled in the value-added approach.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### Improving Teacher Quality

To improve the quality of teaching that D.C. students receive, DCPS officials identified three strategies that they judged would bring about the desired improvements in the quality of teaching—to clarify expectations, provide quality feedback, and retain effective teachers. They developed a comprehensive system that incorporates these strategies. Expectations were clarified through the teaching and learning framework, which also served as the basis for observation protocols and scoring rubrics used in IMPACT. Multiple assessments based on multiple types of measures are used to rate teachers' effectiveness, and feedback mechanisms have been created: trained instructional coaches are tasked with helping teachers understand their weaknesses and find ways to improve. A system of rewards and sanctions is designed to encourage all teachers to improve, encourage effective teachers to stay, and allow ineffective teachers to be dismissed.

However, our review revealed several areas for improvement. One issue is the changes in IMPACT since its initial implementation. The changes confound attempts to make comparisons across years and interfere with evaluating one of the chief purposes for the program: to determine if teacher effectiveness ratings improved over time. It would be advisable for DCPS to provide documentation and rationales to justify any decisions to make changes in the evaluation system and demonstrate that the benefits of making the change outweigh the negative effects it will have on comparability across time. DCPS could also calculate the ratings by applying the new weights to prior years' data solely for research purposes and to enable comparisons.

A second issue is the use of value-added estimates that are based on only 1 year of data. It would be advisable for DCPS to explore the precision of the estimates and their stability across years, comparing the current approach of value-added estimates based on a single year with estimates based on multiple years.

A third issue is the relatively limited range of classroom practices that

are included in IMPACT observations. The teaching and learning framework specified three domains to assess during classroom observations: teaching, planning, and increasing effectiveness. To date, the observations cover only the teaching domain, not the others: the planning domain and the increasing effectiveness domain are described in guidance materials, but they are not yet part of the observations and ratings. It would be advisable for DCPS to take further steps to ensure that these two domains are included in the observations and ratings. It would also be advisable for the city to consider expanding the information collected to include samples of student work, as is done in other teacher evaluation systems. In addition, it would be advisable for DCPS to implement quality-control procedures for the observational measures in IMPACT.

**CONCLUSION 4-1** DCPS officials defined a three-pronged approach to improving teacher quality: clarify performance expectations, provide quality feedback and support to teachers, and retain the most effective teachers. The design of the IMPACT teacher evaluation system and the associated implementation plan are generally consistent with current research on teacher evaluation systems. Four aspects of IMPACT's rating procedures need attention:

1. Quality control procedures are needed for the judgment-based ratings of teachers' commitment to school community and core professionalism, to ensure that scoring criteria are consistently applied.
2. More stringent quality control procedures are needed for developing, administering, and scoring the teacher-assessed student achievement component.
3. The city's approach for calculating individual value-added scores is reasonable, given the current state of research. The city's decision to use a single year of data in calculating the value added by a teacher should be reconsidered regularly in light of new research and in light of the inherent tradeoffs of using single or multiple years.
4. Changes have been made to the ways the components of IMPACT are weighted, and a new effectiveness category was added, but the reasons for these changes are not documented. The justification for these changes needs to be made available.

**CONCLUSION 4-2** Changes that have been made to the relative weighting of the components of an IMPACT score mean that overall effectiveness scores are not comparable across years. The addition of a fifth effectiveness category in 2012 further complicates comparisons. Reports of trends in measured teacher effectiveness should clearly

acknowledge these changes so that readers do not misinterpret the numbers.

**CONCLUSION 4-3** DCPS has procedures in place to use information from IMPACT to provide feedback and support to teachers and to encourage those who perform well to stay. The available data suggest that some of the desired changes in the workforce are evident: more than 80 percent of teachers classified as effective or higher remained in the system, while less than half of teachers classified as minimally effective remained with the system. However, these trend data do not provide conclusive evidence on whether IMPACT has been successful in meeting all of its goals, nor do they isolate its effects on students or educators from those of other policy changes that have occurred since PERAA.

### Experience with IMPACT

The committee's review of the data from IMPACT revealed marked disparities in the distribution of highest- and lowest-rated teachers by ward. Wards with the highest concentration of students in poverty tend to have teachers with lower effectiveness ratings. The source of these disparities is not clear, and it would be advisable for DCPS to investigate them.

**CONCLUSION 4-4** Teachers with high IMPACT scores are not evenly distributed across DCPS schools. The data show an association between high concentrations of poverty and low IMPACT scores: average IMPACT scores for teachers in low- and medium-SES schools are consistently 24 to 30 points lower than for those teachers in the highest-SES schools. The reasons for this uneven distribution are not clear.

Like assessment systems, teacher evaluation systems should be validated to determine the extent to which the inferences about teacher effectiveness are supported by evidence. DCPS articulated a number of goals for IMPACT but has not yet developed a plan for evaluating progress toward meeting them. The committee recognizes that systematic evaluation is difficult and somewhat uncommon, but given the novel nature and potential unintended consequences of IMPACT, DCPS could benefit from careful assessment of its effects and, more generally, of the characteristics of the educator workforce.

DCPS placed a high priority on improving the quality of the teacher workforce, under the premise that improving teacher quality would lead to improved conditions and outcomes for students, particularly students who have traditionally been underserved. To date, most DCPS teachers have re-

ceived high effectiveness ratings; however, these teachers are not distributed equitably across districts with high concentrations of poverty. A structured plan for gathering validity evidence, particularly on the distribution of high-quality teachers across schools, is needed so that DCPS can evaluate how well IMPACT is reaching its intended goals and where changes are needed.

**CONCLUSION 4-5** The city needs a plan for gathering evidence to evaluate the extent to which the intended inferences from IMPACT are supported, particularly with respect to the improvement of teaching in schools serving lower-achieving students.\*

The city needs to undertake additional data collection and analysis to fully understand teacher quality, teacher evaluation, and teacher supports in the charter school sector as it seeks to understand and improve the quality of teaching for all public school students. There are also data that can be collected about all teachers that would not be subject to the changes in the IMPACT program, such as years of experience, highest degree, and others.

**CONCLUSION 4-6** Trends in teacher performance as measured by IMPACT are a tool for tracking teacher quality, but they have important drawbacks. The relative weighting of the components has changed over time. Moreover, these measures provide information only about DCPS teachers, not about teachers in charter schools. The city would benefit from maintaining data about teachers in both DCPS and the charter schools, including

- years of experience,
- years with the school system,
- time in a specific school,
- teaching assignments,
- teacher attendance rates,
- education level and highest degree earned,
- area of certification, and
- an indicator of out-of-field teaching assignment(s).

Such information should be maintained for all teachers (those in charter schools as well as DCPS) in a manner that supports comparison across time and by ward. These data should be accessible to researchers, educators, parents, and the public.

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\*The committee's final version of wording for this conclusion was inadvertently not made prior to the release of the report.



## 5

# Learning Conditions

The fourth question in the charge to the committee was whether learning conditions improved overall and for diverse public schools and their students in the years after the Public Education Reform Amendment Act (PERAA) was enacted. We approached this topic with the assumption that all students need well-crafted academic challenges and supports, as well as many other kinds of supports that allow them to take full advantage of academic opportunities. Curriculum, standards, and academic resources are important conditions for learning, as are other aspects of what takes place in school, including school climate, disciplinary policies, and teachers' expectations. What students bring to school is just as important: learning is affected by social and cognitive development beginning at the prenatal stage; physical and mental health; family and neighborhood circumstances, cultural traditions and language; and socioeconomic status.<sup>1</sup> Each of these factors can contribute to or mitigate disparities in students' educational experiences.

Evaluating all of these factors at once is not possible, as the Phase I report (National Research Council, 2011) noted. D.C.'s education agencies collect a great deal of information about students and schools, but there is no coordinated system of ongoing monitoring and evaluation of learn-

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<sup>1</sup>For discussion of the ways academic and nonacademic factors influence learning, see, among others, Moss et al. (2008), Boykin and Noguera (2011), Duncan and Murnane (2011), Pullman et al. (2011), and Carter and Welner (2013). The website of the Stanford Center for Opportunity in Education also has many resources: see <https://edpolicy.stanford.edu> [September 2014].

ing conditions that covers all public school students. In this chapter, we consider some of the functions that directly affect conditions for learning and how those conditions may have changed as PERAA was implemented.

We focused on evidence about the equity of learning opportunities across the public schools. Because we could not evaluate all relevant factors, we identified several key factors that affect students and schools that we judged would represent the range of issues that are important to reducing disparities. In this chapter, we discuss opportunities for students with disabilities and English-language learners, the use of attendance and disciplinary actions, and early childhood education and advanced placement offerings. We also address goals for improving how the city monitors learning conditions, a function that is essential to ongoing improvement.

There was limited information available on many topics we hoped to examine. We also note that it is not possible to attribute any changes in learning conditions directly to the passage of PERAA because so many factors influence learning conditions (see Chapter 1). For each of these factors, we describe what we learned about the agencies' actions and notable changes for which we found evidence. We did not collect data on the implementation of programmatic decisions. That is, we describe the city's intentions and decisions with respect to, for example, the implementation of the Common Core standards, but do not have direct evidence from the classroom about how these decisions have been implemented.

Sources for this chapter include

- information and documentation provided by offices within the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), and the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board (PCSB);
- publicly available materials we obtained from agency websites;
- interviews and informal conversations and e-mail exchanges with city officials and others with knowledge of the city's schools and learning conditions, which we used to understand the functions and operations of the education agencies;
- relevant scholarly research; and
- reports from other sources that provide either context for understanding the current D.C. environment for learning or other relevant information about the city; including advocacy reports and the second of the five reports prepared for the committee by EdCORE (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2013b).

We asked officials at DCPS, PCSB, and OSSE a number of questions pertaining to learning conditions and requested data and documentation from all three. In response to these requests, PCSB explained that, by design, it

does not systematically collect most of the information we requested. PCSB directed us to consult directly with each of the 61 charter-holding organizations<sup>2</sup> for the information we requested. However, collecting, aggregating, and analyzing the data needed were not feasible for this project. As we discuss in Chapter 2, an important rationale cited by charter proponents for including charter schools in a public school system is that they should be independent of guidance about how they educate their students and manage their schools. Under this logic, each charter school (or its governing entity) is accountable for outcomes rather than for its approaches to instruction. Thus, by necessity, this chapter focuses primarily on DCPS, but, whenever possible, we discuss evidence for the charter schools.

We begin with an overview of the goals and structures designed to improve learning conditions in the city's public schools. We then explore learning conditions for groups of students with particular needs. In the fourth section we examine academic offerings and supports available within the schools. The last section of the chapter presents our summary and conclusions about learning conditions.

## INFLUENCES ON CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING

In the United States, it is the school districts, rather than the states or the federal government, which directly run and staff the public schools and have the greatest influence on learning conditions. In D.C., the issue is complicated by that fact that the city bears both the local (district) and state responsibilities for public education. As we discuss in Chapter 3, the way that the entities that govern D.C.'s public schools currently work together depends more on collegiality than on institutional structures and incentives, a situation that complicates the city's efforts to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all students.

The role played by states varies across the nation and has been changing, partly in response to the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, which called on states to play a more active role in school improvement (Sunderman and Orfield, 2006; Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2009; Brown et al., 2011; Murphy and Hill, 2011). Traditionally, a primary responsibility for states has been to monitor compliance with federal rules and regulations, but they have also taken on such specific responsibilities as setting policies for or developing curricula, standards, and assessments; issuing charters; and licensing educators (U.S. Department of Education, 2008; State and Local Government on the Net, 2010). Broader responsibilities sometimes include providing oversight and guidance to local

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<sup>2</sup>Every charter organization (which may operate one or more school campuses) functions as an individual local education agency (LEA) or school district.

school boards; coordinating statewide planning; promoting excellence in education; and overseeing the provision of educational services for individuals with disabilities and other groups with special needs.

The responsibility for learning conditions in D.C. is dispersed. There are technically 62 school districts or LEAs, DCPS, and the individual organizations that hold public education charters. D.C.'s two state-level agencies, OSSE and the State Board of Education (SBOE) also have responsibilities that directly affect learning conditions (see Chapters 2 and 3 and Appendix D). OSSE's mission includes ensuring that all schools meet federal requirements, "providing resources and support to assist the District's most vulnerable student populations," and "providing resources to support children from birth to post-secondary education" (see Chapter 3). SBOE is responsible for setting academic standards and graduation requirements. The responsibilities of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) are more general: its mission is to develop and implement "the mayor's vision for academic excellence and [create] a high quality education continuum from birth to 24," but as we discuss in Chapter 3, its staff is small and its focus is at the policy level.

A number of documents prepared after PERAA's adoption discuss the goals city officials established for the school reforms: see Table 5-1. The goals apply across the public schools but because of the charter schools' freedom to make most decisions, these goals have had more practical relevance for DCPS. Education plans put forward by Mayors Fenty and Gray as each took office also describe initiatives that were planned (Fenty, 2007a; Vince Gray for Mayor, 2010). DCPS's performance plan for fiscal 2009 describes six objectives, each with a set of specific initiatives and sub-goals (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2009a). More recently, DCPS developed a guiding document, *Overview of Teaching and Learning at DC Public Schools*, which describes the means by which it plans to meet key performance goals (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2014c).<sup>3</sup> These and other documents discuss many activities and programs; as a group they indicate that city leaders identified several goals in their initial responses to PERAA and have sustained their focus.<sup>4</sup>

For example, we discuss in Chapter 4 the emphasis that DCPS has placed on improving teacher quality. Other themes in DCPS's education approach include continuity from early childhood through college and career readiness; improving the delivery of special education services, academic

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<sup>3</sup>The goals are described in *A Capital Commitment* (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2012); see Chapter 3.

<sup>4</sup>See, for example, Brown (2014c) and Chandler (2014d). See also a report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (2009), which covers some of the city's early responses to PERAA.

TABLE 5-1 Selected Goals Documents

Document	Content
<i>100 Days and Beyond: 2007 Action Plan for the District of Columbia</i> (Fenty, 2007a)	Presented 23 goals for reforming education, in the areas of governance, early childhood education, pre-K–12, higher education/career and technical education/workforce training, and adult education.
<i>Ensuring a Quality Education for All Children: Vince Gray’s Plan for D.C. Schools</i> (Vince Gray for Mayor, 2010)	Described Gray’s education reform plan with respect to leadership; a holistic, birth-to-24 approach to education; the quality of K-12 education; college and career readiness; and transparency, accountability, and sound management.
<i>FY 09 Performance Plan for DC Public Schools</i> (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2009a)	Identified six objectives and initiatives to address them: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure that schools provide a consistent foundation in academics, strong support for social/emotional needs, and a variety of challenging themes and programs.</li> <li>2. Retain the most highly effective and highly compensated educators in the country.</li> <li>3. Implement a rigorous, relevant college preparatory curriculum that gives all students meaningful options for life.</li> <li>4. Support decision making with accurate information about how our students and the school district are performing.</li> <li>5. Provide schools with the central office support they need to foster student achievement.</li> <li>6. Partner with families and community members who demand better schools.</li> </ol>
<i>A Capital Commitment: 2017 Strategic Plan</i> (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2012)	Set five goals to guide improvement 2012-2017: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve achievement rates</li> <li>2. Invest in struggling schools</li> <li>3. Increase graduation rate</li> <li>4. Improve satisfaction</li> <li>5. Increase enrollment</li> </ol>
<i>Effective Schools Framework, 2009</i> (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2009a)	Defined elements of effective schools and set expectations for schools and district pertaining to each: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching and learning</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Job-embedded professional development</li> <li>• Resources</li> <li>• Safe and effective learning environment</li> <li>• Family and community engagement</li> </ul>

*continued*

TABLE 5-1 Continued

Document	Content
<i>Teaching and Learning Framework Resources Overview</i> (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2014c)	Sets detailed expectations for teachers and for professional development; designed as part of IMPACT system.
<i>Overview of Teaching and Learning at DC Public Schools SY14-15</i> (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2014c)	Describes plans for meeting goals set forth in <i>A Capital Commitment</i> (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2012).

supports, student engagement, and curricular offerings; improving accountability; and modernizing school facilities. It was not possible to trace each objective across time, but the city has largely stayed with this course: both the 2011 selection of a new DCPS chancellor who had worked closely with the previous one and the decision by Mayor Bowser (elected in 2014) to retain her in 2015 were signs that the city's recent mayors have pursued consistent goals.

## STUDENTS

Many students in DC's public schools need supplemental supports from the school system and from other city services if they are to learn and flourish. As we discuss in Chapter 2, D.C.'s public schools serve a population that includes high proportions of students in the groups that are often at risk for low performance or school failure. Significant differences in academic achievement and attainment between white and nonwhite students, between low-income students and their more affluent peers, and between students with disabilities and English-language learners and other students have all been persistent challenges in D.C. (see Chapter 6).

There is evidence that socioeconomic disadvantages, such as low income and parental education levels, can interact with race to exacerbate academic challenges for some students (Duncan and Murnane, 2011; for a discussion of these issues in a D.C. context, see Ashton, 2012).<sup>5</sup> These circumstances also likely interact with disparities in the quality of educational opportunities across the city. An analysis by an advocacy group concluded that three factors influence achievement gaps (DC Action for Children, 2012, pp. 2-3):

<sup>5</sup>Student achievement gaps are discussed in Chapter 6, but see, for example, Brown (2013a).

- the economic status of neighborhoods where students attend school;
- the economic status of the neighborhoods where students live, and whether they are neighborhoods of concentrated poverty or neighborhoods of concentrated privilege; and
- differences in school quality by neighborhood.

The students with the greatest needs are certainly not evenly distributed across the city's wards (see Chapter 2). For example, Wards 5 and 6 and, especially, 7 and 8 have the highest percentages of children in families receiving aid through the three main federal programs that provide support to low-income children, youth, and families<sup>6</sup> and the highest percentages of births to mothers with less than 12 years of formal education. Wards 7 and 8 also have the highest numbers of substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect (Child Trends, 2011).

Other factors may also interact with race, income, and parental education level for students. Students with disabilities, English-language learners, and students who are homeless, in foster care, or involved in some way with the juvenile justice system all may need supplementary supports. We could not examine supports and conditions for each of these groups, but we discuss indications we could find of equity across groups, schools, and wards throughout the chapter. We looked in detail at students with disabilities and English-language learners.

### Students with Disabilities

D.C. has a long history of problems with providing appropriate and equitable educational opportunities to students with disabilities, and also with procedural challenges, including compliance with federal regulations regarding these students, who make up 13 percent of public school students. The city has worked on improving a bad situation with respect to students with disabilities and has improved compliance. However, we saw limited evidence of effective coordination across agencies and across LEAs with respect to these students' needs, and their achievement levels remain the lowest of any group.

The city is very far from meeting its targets for the achievement of special education students, in terms of compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). An annual performance report prepared by OSSE showed the targets for these students' achievement: approximately 85 percent of elementary and secondary students score at the proficient

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<sup>6</sup>The three programs are Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANFF), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).

level or above in both reading and mathematics.<sup>7</sup> Yet in 2012, 19 percent of elementary students reached that level in reading, and 24 percent reached it in mathematics. Graduation rates for this group were also very low, 39 percent, in comparison with 59 percent for all students.

### History of Challenges and Efforts to Improve

At the time PERAA was enacted, the city had among the highest rates of per-pupil expenditure for special education services in the nation and was serving many of them in nonpublic schools that were not, in many cases, the least-restrictive environments that are required under IDEA (National Research Council, 2011). The city has consistently had difficulty with federal compliance, as can be seen in a series of high-profile lawsuits extending back to the early 1970s. Perhaps the best-known recent case, *Blackman-Jones*, was two combined class-action lawsuits filed in 1997 that addressed violations under IDEA. It resulted in judicial monitoring of special education in D.C.: the city was only released from judicial oversight related to these cases in 2014. Although the judge found that due process for initial special education evaluations is now in compliance with federal law, not all of the identified problems have been resolved.

The city has made efforts to address the procedural problems in the years since PERAA. For example, it has worked to make sure that placement decisions are made within the appropriate time frame and implemented quickly: these efforts resulted in the dismissal of the *Blackman-Jones* monitoring (Chandler, 2014b). There has been a steep decline in the number of special education due process complaints in the city, though D.C. still represents a large portion of all due process complaints in the country (Samuels, 2014). The city also reports that it has increased funding for special education through the uniform per-student funding formula, which contributed to reducing the number of students educated in nonpublic settings by 50 percent.<sup>8</sup>

In fall 2014, the D.C. Council enacted three laws that were designed to improve special education. These bills aim to (Chandler, 2014c):

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<sup>7</sup>See [http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/release\\_content/attachments/FINAL\\_ESEA\\_Flexibility\\_Context\\_Executive\\_Summary\\_5\\_24\\_12\\_KI%20Edits%20%282%29.pdf](http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/release_content/attachments/FINAL_ESEA_Flexibility_Context_Executive_Summary_5_24_12_KI%20Edits%20%282%29.pdf) [July 2015]. Student achievement data are discussed in Chapter 6 but this document provided information not discussed there.

<sup>8</sup>See <http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/About+DCPS/Press+Releases+and+Announcements/Press+Releases/Mayor+Gray+Announces+End+to+Federal+Court+Oversight+of+District+of+Columbia+Special+Education+System> [February 2015].

- reduce the amount of time parents wait to have their children evaluated,<sup>9</sup>
- expand eligibility for early-intervention services,
- start transition services for students at age 14 instead of 16, and
- improve parents' access to information.

DCPS officials we interviewed said they believe the changes called for in the new laws were already under way, and a special education advocate commented publicly that the progress already made means that the targets set in the legislation might realistically be achieved (Chandler, 2014e).

Our interviews with city officials and requests for data and documentation yielded some insight into the agencies' current arrangements for addressing the needs of these students.

OSSE officials described the structure of the staff departments that play a role in supporting students with disabilities. DCPS officials described supports that have been implemented since PERAA, including the introduction of a new web-based portal and technical assistance team that assist school staff with federal compliance issues. They also noted improvements, such as an increase in school-based psychologists and special education staff, and the development of a diagnostic center that serves young children who may have developmental delays (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2013b).<sup>10</sup> One official we interviewed described the progress DCPS has made in adapting IMPACT to address the skills and needs of special education teachers and noted that their strategy is to focus on improving quality across special needs populations by both analyzing individual cases and tracing patterns across schools. The official noted also an increase in individualized professional development and supports in schools.

We requested data and documentation about the qualifications of and professional development available to special education teachers. DCPS and PCSB both told us that data about qualifications are not tracked, though these teachers must meet the licensure requirements that apply to all educators. We were told by DCPS that it has minimal difficulty filling jobs related to special education, except in particular areas: one example they noted was difficulty in securing educators with expertise in behavior management in the classroom). DCPS shared sample professional development materials and schedules with the committee and told us that a new focus for special education is to help teachers and principals understand how to use the data that the city is collecting in their instructional plans.

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<sup>9</sup>The cap on the wait time had been up to 120 days, the longest in the nation (Chandler, 2014c).

<sup>10</sup>See <http://www.earlystagesdc.org/about> [January 2015].

### Placement: An Ongoing Challenge

One concern in D.C. has been the placement of special education students in private settings, at high cost to the city. In 2008, for example, about 20 percent of special education students were enrolled in private schools, at an average cost of \$57,700 per student per year, with an additional \$19,000 for transportation costs (National Research Council, 2011). At that time, DCPS was responsible for paying the private school tuition and transportation costs, but after PERAA these responsibilities were transferred to OSSE. A study commissioned by OSSE (American Institutes for Research, 2013) found that although the city had improved its compliance with federal regulations—it had reduced the numbers of special education students in private placements—the receiving schools were not well prepared to serve the returning students. The report said that participants in its study “reported deficits in system-provided resources for curriculum, technology, and behavior” (p. x) especially in staffing.

The 50 percent reduction in students in private settings reflects a significant effort for improvement in D.C., but the possibility that the students are not adequately served in public settings is still cause for concern. There are many benefits to reducing private placements, including reduction of costs and the possibility of returning students to the legally mandated least restrictive environment. The most important question, though, is whether these students receive more appropriate and equitable education as a result of the placement changes. This issue merits further investigation.

Another concern that has been raised in D.C. and in other cities is the possibility that charter schools are educating fewer students with disabilities, or fewer of the students with the most severe disabilities, than do traditional public schools. An independent government study found that the percentage of students with disabilities enrolled in charter schools nationwide was lower than the percentage in traditional schools and that fewer charters were serving high percentages of students with disabilities (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2012).

OSSE data show that in 2013-2014, 13 percent of all DCPS and charter school students (11,043) were classified as special education students (14 percent of DCPS students and 12 percent of charter students; see Appendix C).<sup>11</sup> We also found that for that year, DCPS enrolled a greater proportion of students with disabilities than did the charter schools at three of the four classification levels; see Table 5-2. Of the 2,205 students with the most severe disabilities, 1,361 were enrolled in DCPS schools and 844 were enrolled in charter schools. Thus, it does seem that DCPS is educat-

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<sup>11</sup>A small number of charter schools have the exclusive mission of serving students with disabilities.

TABLE 5-2 Enrollment of Students with Disabilities

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
DCPS	2,775	1,956	522	1,361
Charter Schools	1,442	1,465	678	844
Total	4,217	3,421	1,200	2,205

NOTE: Level 4 is the category for the students with the most severe disabilities.

SOURCE: Office of the State Superintendent of Education (2013b).

ing somewhat more than its proportional share of the students with the greatest needs.

We requested data on the mobility of students with disabilities across DCPS and charter schools from OSSE but did not receive it. We also asked about this issue in interviews. One DCPS official offered the following explanation:

[A] charter school can choose DCPS to be its . . . LEA [local education agency] for purposes of special education [dependent charter school] or choose to be its own LEA [independent charter school]. DCPS is not a service provider for students in either independent or dependent charter schools. However, DCPS does complete evaluations for students who have been found eligible for special education services, or are suspected of having a disability, that are enrolled in dependent charter schools. In cases where DCPS is the LEA for a charter school, DCPS does not have any authority or mechanism to ensure that charter school students are receiving services in accordance with their IEPs [individualized education programs]. This framework has proven problematic for purposes of procedural compliance.

In another DCPS official's view, the problem is that a charter school will receive all the required supplementary special education funds for a student while DCPS is still expected to provide supplements that a student requires, such as dedicated aides or home or hospital services. This official also noted that DCPS has no authority to address problems in charter schools: it can only report noncompliance to PCSB and to OSSE. This DCPS official believes that PCSB should develop a consortium to support small LEAs, who have limited resources, to assist them in meeting the needs of special education students.

We note that according to the D.C. School Reform Act of 1995, DCPS can be elected as the LEA for special education *only* for purposes of Part B of IDEA (D.C. Code § 38-1802.10). This provision has been confusing for city officials, we were told by a budget expert in the city, in part because subsequent legislative action modified the provision. An independent report

has recommended that this provision be abolished (American Institutes for Research, 2013).

### Independent Evidence

We looked for independent evidence about concerns related to special education in the city. A recent report (American Institutes for Research, 2013) commissioned by OSSE examined the quality of special education programs in DCPS and the charter schools and made recommendations for improvement. We found these recommendations to be well supported, and they are listed in Appendix E. We highlight here a few points from the report.

The report found many positive elements in services for students with disabilities, including evidence of cross-disciplinary collaboration among educators, effective strategies for behavior management in the classroom, access to a grade-appropriate curriculum, and strategies for differentiating instruction to meet students' needs. However, it also found significant variation in resources and practices across schools. It noted problems with staffing, including widespread concern among teachers and principals that special education programs are understaffed and that teachers often have difficulty finding time to take advantage of professional development opportunities that are offered. According to the report, assessment of staff needs for training is inconsistent, and accountability and support for those who teach students with disabilities are inconsistent.

Another report, prepared by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (2012), noted that many charter LEAs reported having insufficient resources to serve students with severe disabilities. We asked PCSB officials about the support they provide. One official reported that PCSB directs charter LEAs who want technical assistance in this area to resources available through external organizations. Nearly half the LEAs recently took up an offer from a group of outside experts to assist with a self-evaluation process, for example, the official reported.

The AIR report also addressed this issue, noting “a lack of alignment across and within school systems (e.g., DCPS and charter schools) . . . discrepancies in service and a lack of accountability” (American Institutes for Research, 2013, p. xi). Many of the authors' recommendations (see Appendix E) suggest a need for coordination across all of the public schools. The report says, for example, that all public schools “should be required to participate in system-wide reform efforts related to special education,” that “OSSE should consider developing a special education consortium of DCPS, PCSB, charter LEAs, and non-public schools to articulate alignment of standards and curricula,” and that OSSE should work with DCPS, PCSB, and the charter LEAs to “develop a Master Plan for implementing

site-based, ongoing professional development” (p. xii). The report clearly identifies OSSE as the entity the authors believe should oversee the quality of the education of students with disabilities in every public school.

The U.S. Department of Education has recently reported that that D.C. is among the worst school systems in the nation in providing appropriate educational opportunities for students with disabilities, and it has the worst record of any state in the country for meeting federal special education goals.<sup>12</sup> Because D.C. has been in the “needs intervention” category for many years, the Department of Education required it to spend about \$500,000 in federal funds on student evaluation programs (National Research Council, 2011).

Serving students with disabilities is particularly challenging because it requires educational expertise and supplementary resources, while also involving both complex legal requirements and medical and psychosocial diagnoses. While we recognize the city’s significant improvements in compliance, problems remain. Two issues that merit particular attention are the capacity of the charter schools to provide appropriate education and support to students with all disability levels and the distribution of the students with most severe disability levels across the city’s public schools.

### English-Language Learners

The proportion of students in D.C.’s public schools who are identified as English-language learners has grown modestly in the years since PERAA, from 7 to 9 percent, a total of 7,331 students in 2012-2013 (4,716 in DCPS schools and 2,615 in charters; see Chapter 2). We saw little evidence that D.C. has focused systematically on this group’s needs, but there are significant gaps in achievement between these and other students. For example, in 2014, English-language learners performed at about the same levels as economically disadvantaged students and black students—at a significantly lower level than white, Asian, and Hispanic students. Moreover, the performance of English-language learners in both math and reading declined between 2009 and 2014 (see details in Chapter 6). The English-language

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<sup>12</sup>Under IDEA, the Department of Education is required to rank states as falling in one of four categories with respect to meeting requirements for special education. In 2014, D.C. was among six jurisdictions in the lowest category—needs intervention (the others were California, Delaware, Texas, the Bureau of Indian Education, and the Virgin Islands); see <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/new-accountability-framework-raises-bar-state-special-education-programs> [January 2014]. A June 23, 2014, letter from the Department of Education to D.C.’s state superintendent describes the reasons the city was found to need intervention: see <http://www2.ed.gov/fund/data/report/idea/partbspap/2014/dc-acc-apr-ltr-2014b.pdf> [February 2015]. With respect to D.C.’s record, see <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/08/08/37ratings-2.h31.html> [January 2014].

learners who were enrolled in charter schools fared worse, performing at a lower level than any other group except students with disabilities.

OSSE provided us with analysis of 2012 District of Columbia Comprehensive Assessment System (DC CAS) mathematics data for English-language learners from the 2012 DC CAS that includes a bit more detail.<sup>13</sup> Their analysis showed that students who have relatively higher scores on an English-language proficiency test performed somewhat better on the DC CAS that year, and that the students who performed most poorly in mathematics were also those who have remained in English-language learning status the longest, 3 years or more. The analysis OSSE provided also showed that DCPS educates many more English-language learners, and more of those with the lowest levels of English proficiency, than do charter schools.

A number of challenges face students who are not fluent in English and the schools that educate them. These students are a disparate group, so it is important that schools both identify individual students' needs for language and other academic support, and ensure that they progress academically while they gain fluency in English. Teachers need training and resources to meet the needs of these students, including accurate tools for assessing their progress.

We asked OSSE, DCPS, and PCSB for information about the education of English-language learners, and we also spoke with officials in each agency about these questions. DCPS and OSSE provided us with sample documents illustrating procedures they use for placement and classification, monitoring the progress of students who are not fluent in English in their academic subjects, and licensure and certification of teachers.

This overview is by no means a thorough examination of the educational status of these students, but we had little information to assess. The number of English-language learners in D.C. is not especially large, but we could identify no significant mechanisms for coordination across DCPS and charter LEAs with respect to their education and supports. We were told by a city official that there are no basic protocols or guidelines that apply to all schools. Because charter schools are evaluated by PCSB on their outcomes, not their practices, PCSB has no staff dedicated to overseeing English-language learning issues or students. DCPS's office of specialized instruction is responsible for many issues and programs, including language acquisition, as well as early childhood programs, special education compliance issues, and inclusive programming for special education students. OSSE has a single full-time staff person responsible for Title III programs.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>This test is no longer used in D.C.; see Chapter 3.

<sup>14</sup>Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) covers language instruction for limited-English-proficient and immigrant students.

Title III funds are intended to support supplemental activities for English-language learners, but in the words of one city official we interviewed, “there is nothing to supplement.”

Another city official we interviewed commented that “there is no monitoring arm for how LEAs serve the ELL population.” For example, this person noted, the city provides \$4,200 in funds in addition to the \$11,000 allocated under the uniform per student funding formula (an additional \$6,000 is provided for each special education student), but there is no structure for monitoring what LEAs do with these funds or determining whether they are addressing students’ basic needs. At the same time, charter schools have no consistent source of technical assistance or other resources, such as professional development, to help ensure that they are providing what English-language learners need. As a city official noted, “there is no way for people to know if they are doing it right.” Another official commented that “nobody is looking across ELLs. OSSE could do that but isn’t currently.”

The city would benefit from having systematic data and analysis covering DCPS and charter schools that addresses such topics as placement and identification of need, availability of resources, qualifications and professional development for educators, and technical support.

### SCHOOLS: DISCIPLINE AND ATTENDANCE

Many factors are important to sustaining a constructive and productive school climate, and a comprehensive review of them was beyond the scope of this project.<sup>15</sup> We focused on two—discipline and attendance—because together they provide a reasonable starting point for understanding conditions in schools.

We requested information about discipline and attendance and truancy from OSSE, DCPS, and PCSB. We also found several relevant reports prepared by D.C. agencies, information on agency websites, and reports prepared by other groups.

OSSE’s function with respect to discipline and attendance has been to collect and analyze information, and the office provided us with counts of discipline and truancy incidents for DCPS and the charter schools. DME has established a task force focused on reducing truancy, which posts information about its activities.<sup>16</sup> PCSB tracks basic data about both discipline and truancy and provided this to us. DCPS provided us with documenta-

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<sup>15</sup>For further discussion and resources, see, for example, National School Climate Center (2007, n.d.); Cohen et al. (2008); and Thapa et al. (2012).

<sup>16</sup>See <http://dme.dc.gov/page/reducing-truancy-and-reconnecting-youth-educational-opportunities> [January 2014].

**TABLE 5-3** Discipline Incidents in D.C. Public Schools

School Level	DCPS	Charter Schools	Total
Elementary			
Data from OSSE	1,048	596	1,644
Data from PCSB			1,598
Middle School			
Data from OSSE	2,146	1,251	3,397
Data from PCSB			4,301
High School			
Data from OSSE	1,492	640	2,132
Data from PCSB			2,627
Total			
Data from OSSE	4,760	2,681	7,441

NOTES: PCSB data are for 2013-2014; OSSE data are for 2012-2013. OSSE indicated that for this purpose, “discipline is defined by the standards of the U.S. Department of Education (i.e. not discipline incidents based on breaking a charter school’s discipline policy.” PCSB did not define what incidents were counted. The total from OSSE, 7,441, does not match the total of the three counts they provided for the grade bands, which total 7,173. DCPS, D.C. Public Schools; OSSE, Office of the State Superintendent of Education; PCSB, Public Charter School Board.

SOURCE: Data supplied by OSSE, DCPS, and PCSB, as indicated.

tion of attendance and discipline policies and a summary of recent data on suspensions.

### Discipline

Table 5-3 summarizes the discipline data provided by OSSE and the PCSB. There were more than 7,000 discipline incidents in 2012-2013 (among the 80,231 total students enrolled that year).<sup>17</sup> An OSSE staff member advised us that for this purpose, “discipline is defined by the standards of the U.S. Department of Education (i.e. not discipline incidents based on breaking a charter school’s discipline policy.”

Separate data on suspensions and expulsions from D.C. public schools for 2011-2012 comes from an advocacy group (Every Student Every Day Coalition, n.d.): see Table 5-4. These data show 18,950 exclusions from the classroom that year: 11,226 in DCPS schools and 7,724 in charter schools.

This large discrepancy is puzzling, although the independent report

<sup>17</sup>See <http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/SY13-14%20Enrollment%20Audit%20Overview%20%282.26.2014%29%5B1%5D.pdf> [April 2015].

**TABLE 5-4** Independent Discipline Data for 2011-2012

Suspensions and Expulsions	DCPS	Charter Schools	Total
Total Number of Students	46,048	31,557	77,605
1- to 10-Day Suspensions	10,836	7,170	18,006
10+-Day Suspensions	387	327	714
Expulsions	3	227	230
Total Exclusions from Classrooms	11,226	7,742	18,950

SOURCE: Adapted from Every Student Every Day Coalition (n.d.).

indicates that the data were provided from the city. It is likely that different methods or definitions were used in counting incidents. Although these data are hard to reconcile, they both highlight that the magnitude of the problem is significant.<sup>18</sup>

Analysis of some details in the discipline data from DCPS and OSSE sheds some additional light. DCPS provided the committee with information from a review of suspension data for 2012-2013: slightly more than 25 percent of the suspensions in DCPS elementary schools were for special education students;<sup>19</sup> the highest suspension rates are in middle schools, followed by education campuses;<sup>20</sup> the 8th and 9th grades had the highest rates of long-term suspensions.<sup>21</sup>

An OSSE report on out-of-school suspensions and expulsions in DCPS and charter schools included incidence data and recommendations for reducing the number of these incidents (Office of the State Superintendent of Education, 2013). That report indicated that nearly 10,000 students were suspended at least once during 2012-2013, with out-of-school suspension or expulsion being four times more likely than in-school suspension. We note that this figure is notably lower than the Every Student Every Day figure of 18,950 for 2011-2012, but it is substantially higher than the total number of incidents reported by OSSE for 2012-2013. The OSSE report indicated that discipline associated with violence, drugs, alcohol, or weapons was most likely for students in grades 6 through 9. The report also details the characteristics of disciplined students:

<sup>18</sup>For a discussion of discipline and safety data, see <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011806.pdf> [April 2015].

<sup>19</sup>Special education students are 14 percent of the total DCPS student population, but we do not have the percentage for DCPS elementary students; see Appendix C.

<sup>20</sup>Education campuses are schools that serve larger grade spans than most—some serve pre-K through grade 8 and some serve grades 6-12.

<sup>21</sup>DCPS also provided us with general descriptions of strategies for school safety and discipline, which are also posted online: see <http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/Files/downloads/SCHOOLS/Youth%20Engagement/Disengaged%20Youth/DCPS-Approach-to-Safe-Effective-Learning-Environment-August-1.pdf> [February 2015].

- male (1.68 times more likely than female);
- attend DCPS schools (1.58 times more likely than charter school students);
- black (six times more likely than white) or Hispanic (twice as likely as white);
- eligible for support for low-income families, such as free or reduced-price lunch, TANF, or SNAP (1.3 to 1.5 times more likely than other students);
- homeless (1.2 times more likely than nonhomeless students); and
- receive special education services (1.4 to 1.7 times more likely than students who do not, depending on service level).<sup>22</sup>

The report notes that these disparities are similar to (in some cases less severe than) those found nationwide, according to the U.S. Department of Education. It also notes that research has shown a disturbing connection in the United States between severe school discipline and students' later involvement in the judicial system. The report does not address possible explanations for the patterns in disciplinary actions.

The OSSE report also documents wide differences in the rates of disciplinary actions across city schools: there are 43 DCPS and charter schools that did not suspend or expel any students in 2012-2013, 37 schools that had suspended at least 25 percent of their students, and 8 schools that had suspended at least 50 percent of their students for at least one day. The report does not address the rates across wards or neighborhoods.

The report also discusses disparities between DCPS and the charter schools in terms of professional development on the topic of discipline. In a survey of teachers, 80 percent of those in DCPS schools and 93 percent of those in charter schools said they would like to receive more professional development associated with discipline-related topics, such as violence and substance use. The report noted that DCPS offers significantly more professional development than do the charter schools on mental and emotional health, alcohol and other drug use, and tobacco-use prevention (Office of the State Superintendent of Education, 2013, p. 25).

The OSSE report also found that “0.71 percent of 3 year-olds and 0.55 percent of 4 year-olds received out of school suspensions during the 12-13 school year” (Office of the State Superintendent of Education, 2013, p. 19) and noted that suspensions and expulsions at these early ages tend to increase the likelihood that students will have discipline and other problems in the future. The report recommended that schools not suspend or expel

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<sup>22</sup>Special education services are classified according to the severity of the disability addressed. We note that federal law protects students from suspension if the behavior at issue is related to their disability.

pre-K students. The D.C. Council recently passed a bill that would ban most suspensions and expulsions for pre-K students.<sup>23</sup>

The OSSE report makes other recommendations “to combat the loss of instructional time and create uniform discipline regulations throughout the District of Columbia” (Office of the State Superintendent of Education, 2013, p. 16). These include instituting procedural safeguards, following best practices established by the U.S. Department of Education, and requiring improved reporting regarding discipline for all charter LEAs. With regard to data collection and reporting, the report notes that without it “LEAs may be unaware of the disparities occurring within their schools,” and be “unable to remedy the situation” (Office of the State Superintendent of Education, 2013, p. 23).

The Every Student Every Day Coalition report does address differences across wards. It notes that suspension rates are highest in Wards 7 and 8 (35 percent in both) and lowest in Wards 2 and 3 (7 and 9 percent, respectively) and that these rates closely track poverty levels across the city. The report also discusses disparities between the DCPS and charter schools. Some charter schools serving the youngest children, the report notes, “employed suspensions at an alarmingly high rate” (Every Student Every Day Coalition, n.d., p. 5). Expulsions were much more common in charter schools than in DCPS schools: “[O]f the 230 expulsions during the 2011-12 school year, only 3 were from DCPS schools . . . just 11 charter schools accounted for 75 percent of the expulsions” (p. 9). One charter middle school suspended 67 percent of its students in that year (Brown, 2013c). The report makes recommendations that address classroom management and disciplinary guidelines as well as improved (disaggregated) data collection and reporting.

The *Washington Post* also reviewed discipline data and reported similar findings (Brown, 2013b). In 2011-2012, it reported, charter schools “removed 227 children for discipline violations and had an expulsion rate of 72 per 10,000 students; the District school system removed three and had an expulsion rate of less than 1 per 10,000 students” (p. 1). This review also noted that charter schools’ discipline policies vary: some are similar to those of DCPS, while “others have “zero tolerance” policies that allow expulsion for nonviolent offenses, such as skipping class, or for repeated minor infractions, such as violating dress codes.”

PCSB reported in 2014 that it had supported charter schools in significantly reducing the rates of these incidents.<sup>24</sup> A summary of this effort

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<sup>23</sup>See <http://www.davidgrosso.org/grosso-analysis/2015/1/6/pre-k-student-discipline-amendment-act-of-2015> [March 2015].

<sup>24</sup>See <http://www.scribd.com/doc/238691457/2014-Discipline-and-Attendance-Briefing#scribd> [January 2014].

describes strategies for reducing expulsions and suspensions, noting that PCSB's role is to assess discipline policies, analyze data to identify trends, and notify LEAs of them. The report indicates that between 2009-2010 and 2013-2014 expulsions and suspensions both declined: For expulsions, the total number declined from a high of 263 in 2010-2011 to 139 in 2013-2014; for suspensions, the percentage of students who received at least one out-of-school suspension declined from 14.5 percent in 2012-2013 to 11.9 percent in 2013-2014.

This assortment of information presents a picture that is in one sense confusing. The data from the various sources conflict with each other. The equity reports available at the LearnDC website<sup>25</sup> (see Chapter 3) provide some discipline data for individual schools, but the *Washington Post* reported that D.C. officials “track only expulsions that they are required to report to the federal government, which include those due to violence, weapons, alcohol or drugs” but may exclude expulsions for other causes (Brown, 2013b).

At the same time, the available data clearly indicate that many of the city's public schools, particularly charter schools, have relied heavily on suspensions and expulsions, and it is noteworthy that discipline problems are greatest in the schools with the highest numbers of low-income students. The comments we heard from city officials were in accord with three conclusions in several of the reports on the subject: (1) there is a lack of coordination with respect to discipline; (2) students and schools would benefit if there were an entity that could collect and analyze data; and (3) students and schools would benefit if there were an entity that could develop consistent approaches that would apply across DCPS and the charter LEAs.

We believe the city would benefit from monitoring a range of information, including

- the number of discipline events, their nature, and where they occur;
- outcomes for students who have been disciplined;
- factors that contribute to high rates of discipline incidents in schools.
- options schools have, other than suspension or expulsion, for addressing disruptive or physically aggressive students;
- resources available for in-school suspensions, conflict resolution, or prevention strategies;
- the provision of professional development to assist educators in working with students with behavior difficulties; and
- family and community engagement efforts to address student behavioral needs.

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<sup>25</sup>LearnDC is a city website on which information about DCPS and charter schools is posted; see <http://www.learnDC.org> [March 2015].

### Attendance and Truancy

Both OSSE and PCSB provided us with limited data on truancy. As shown in Table 5-5, the data were for two adjacent years, but this difference is unlikely to account for the notable discrepancies in numbers reported for the charter schools. A report by D.C. Kids Count, which summarizes a review of city data on truancy and attendance and difficulties with city data, provides some useful analysis regarding the discrepancies (DC Action for Children, 2014). The report notes that there are multiple ways to calculate attendance problems, and it says that the way these data are currently tracked in D.C. makes it difficult to see the magnitude of the problem and may even disguise problems with chronic absenteeism. The report argues that tracking chronic absenteeism, including excused absences, would provide a better way to identify students who are at risk for academic problems because they are missing school time. A 2012 overview of attendance issues across the nations noted that few states were accurately tracking chronic absenteeism and made recommendations for improving data collection in this area (Balfanz and Byrnes, 2012).

Even using the limited data available, however, the report found evidence of a “crisis of school absenteeism” (DC Action for Children, 2014, p. 1), noting that “at least one in five DC students had more than 10 unexcused absences from school in 2012-2013.” Among DCPS students, 1 in

**TABLE 5-5** Truancy Incidents in D.C. Public Schools

School Level	DCPS	Charter Schools	Total
Elementary			
Data from OSSE (2012-2013)	1,937	2,331	
Data from PCSB (2013-2014)		921	
Middle School			
Data from OSSE	767	1,813	
Data from PCSB		1,122	
High School			
Data from OSSE	6,221	3,091	
Data from PCSB		1,659	
Total: Data from OSSE	11,236	10,184	21,420 <sup>a</sup>

NOTES: OSSE defined truancy as 10 or more unexcused absences in a year; PCSB did not define what was counted. DCPS, D.C. Public Schools; OSSE, Office of the State Superintendent of Education; PCSB, Public Charter School Board.

<sup>a</sup>There were 5,260 “other” truancy incidents (i.e., not included in totals for DCPS and charter schools), but OSSE did not explain what this category covered. With that total added, the total incidents reported by OSSE is 26,680.

SOURCE: Data provided by OSSE and PCSB.

10 missed at least 20 unexcused days of school; among charter students, 1 in 13 did so. In that year, truancy was 42 percent in DCPS high schools and 34 percent in charter schools.

The report particularly emphasized evidence of problems with absenteeism among pre-K and elementary school students: one in six students ages 3-5 had at least 10 unexcused absences. Studies of rates in other cities have also found high rates of chronic absenteeism in pre-K: 26.5 percent in Baltimore, 45 percent for 3-year-olds and 36 percent for 4-year-olds in Chicago, and 50 percent in New York City (Balfanz and Byrnes, 2012; Connolly and Olson, 2012; Dubay and Holla, 2015; Ehrlich et al., 2014). Attendance problems in these early years have received less attention, the report argues, but have lasting effects on achievement gaps.<sup>26</sup>

The report recommends that D.C. improve its methods for monitoring chronic absenteeism and developing prevention and interventions strategies. Among its specific recommendations are that OSSE align its definition of chronic absenteeism with national norms and collect data on students who are absent 10 percent of school days or more and that individual schools be required to include detailed attendance data in their equity reports<sup>27</sup> and school improvement plans (DC Action for Children, 2014).

OSSE has published a guide that discusses the causes of truancy, explains regulations designed to address it, and offers tips to parents.<sup>28</sup> DME has a relatively new task force on truancy (see Chapter 3). However, these resources do not provide a clear picture of the extent and nature of problems or of the factors that contribute to them. We believe the city would benefit from improved data collection and monitoring in several areas:

- accurate and consistent data, collected according to national norms, on attendance and truancy;
- factors that contribute to high rates of truancy in schools;
- outcomes for students who with chronic attendance problems and the links between early attendance problems and subsequent dropping out of school;
- resources available for targeting truancy and attendance problems;
- the provision of professional development to assist educators in addressing attendance problems; and
- family and community engagement efforts to address attendance problems.

<sup>26</sup>See also [http://www.urban.org/research/publication/absenteeism-dc-public-schools-early-education-program/view/full\\_report](http://www.urban.org/research/publication/absenteeism-dc-public-schools-early-education-program/view/full_report) [May 2015].

<sup>27</sup>Reports on individual schools available at the city website LearnDC, see <http://www.learnDC.org/> [May 2015].

<sup>28</sup>See <http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/Truancy%20Guide-ONLINE-021014.pdf> [February 2015].

## ACADEMIC OPPORTUNITIES

This section considers changes in learning opportunities for all students since PERAA was passed. Inadequate learning opportunities for many students have been at the heart of critiques of the D.C.'s public school for decades, and there has been ample reason for concern. In 2011, the Phase I report (National Research Council, 2011) noted that the city was just embarking on many new initiatives designed to improve teaching and learning in response to evidence from 20 years of reports and evaluations that were critical of teaching, curriculum, and testing in the city. That report discussed the city's history of persistent achievement gaps and problems with D.C.'s capacity to serve and support special education students. It also cited challenges the city was facing in serving its most vulnerable young people, particularly those in Wards 1, 7, and 8, who had the highest level of factors that put them at risk for school failure.<sup>29</sup> We focused on three aspects of academic opportunity: developments in early childhood education, K-12 academic offerings, and college and career readiness.

### Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education is a foundation on which other improvement efforts can build, and its benefits have been well documented (see, e.g., National Research Council, 2000; Yoshikawa et al. 2013).<sup>30</sup> They include long-term gains in reading, language, and mathematics skills for children and long-term economic benefits for communities. The evidence that high-quality preschool can help narrow achievement gaps is particularly strong for black children (Ahmad and Hamm, 2013).

D.C. began a concerted effort to make pre-K education universally available before PERAA (Watson, 2010) and has continued to focus on early childhood education; the city now provides free pre-K programs for all 3- and 4-year-olds. Under PERAA, OSSE was charged with overseeing "the state-level functions and activities related to early childhood education programs" (Title III). In 2008, the City Council passed the Pre-Kindergarten Enhancement and Expansion Amendment Act, which provided funding to expand pre-K programming and improve quality. Under this law (38-273.01), funds are disbursed to public schools and to private, community-based pre-K programs on a per-pupil basis. OSSE is also required to report annually on the status of pre-K education in the city and on its monitoring and accountability process and to provide early

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<sup>29</sup>See also Parents United for the D.C. Public Schools (2005).

<sup>30</sup>"Early education," "preschool," and "pre-K" are not precise terms but pre-K usually refers to programs for 3- and 4-year-olds, while the other two terms are more likely to encompass programs for younger children and those that include full-day and year-round offerings.

intervention services to infants and toddlers, from birth through 2 years of age, and their families.

OSSE has a Division of Early Learning to oversee programs for all children from birth to kindergarten entry.<sup>31</sup> This office is responsible for licensing and compliance for all programs whether operated by DCPS, the charter schools, or community based. It also provides training and technical assistance and other supports. The office has evaluators who monitor health and safety compliance issues, as well as the quality of programming. For DCPS, early learning is the responsibility of the Office of Specialized Instruction. DCPS offers pre-K programming for 4-year-olds at every elementary school and programming for 3-year-olds at many. D.C. schools that are eligible for Title I funding under ESEA (those in which 40 percent or more of enrolled students are low income) provide other supports, including developmental and health screenings.

OSSE reports that it has established standards for early learning that are aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the standards for Head Start (Office of the State Superintendent of Education, 2013). DCPS also has standards for kindergarten readiness (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2010). OSSE has pilot tested a tool for assessing children's readiness for kindergarten, and it has joined a research consortium that has won a federal grant to support continued efforts to improve the tool. Charter schools may identify their own assessment tools, with OSSE's approval. We were not able to obtain information on plans for addressing readiness problems identified using this tool.

By 2013, OSSE has reported, the city had more than enough slots to enroll all of the 15,314 3- and 4-year-old children in the city (Office of the State Superintendent of Education, 2013). In 2012-2013, 13,182 children were enrolled in a free pre-K program, and another 5,718 participated in a Head Start program. Some critics have observed that not all families have been able to find slots in the programs they prefer, though the overall capacity is greater than the number of children enrolled (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2013b). We did not have data on how the spaces are distributed across the wards. DCPS uses a lottery system to allocate places when demand exceeds supply for particular programs.<sup>32</sup>

Monitoring the quality of early education programs is challenging (see, e.g., National Research Council, 2008; Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2012; Bornfreund, 2013; Diamond et al., 2013). OSSE is working with DME to develop a rating tool for monitoring the quality of pre-K programs and has issued grants designed to increase the high-quality pre-K options for children in Wards 1, 4, 5, 7, and 8, where the

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<sup>31</sup>See <http://osse.dc.gov/service/about-early-learning> [October 2014].

<sup>32</sup>See <http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/Learn+About+Schools/Academic+Offerings#3> [February 2015].

greatest numbers of children identified as educationally at risk live (Office of the State Superintendent of Education, 2013). PCSB is piloting a component of its performance management framework (see Chapter 3) that addresses early childhood; participation in this component of the framework is currently optional.<sup>33</sup> DCPS staff told us they evaluate pre-K teachers using a program that is also used by Head Start programs; they are working on improving alignment between this program and IMPACT, the main program for evaluating teachers (see Chapter 4).

A DCPS official we interviewed said that PERAA had an important benefit for early childhood education because the flexibility the law allowed to DCPS officials made it possible to implement a schoolwide approach to Head Start, which in turn allowed DCPS to provide comprehensive Head Start services to all 3- and 4-year-olds in pre-K programs in Title I schools, regardless of income. The purpose of this approach was to serve more eligible children and families with comprehensive services, improve accountability, and “serve as a national laboratory for Head Start services.”

We found one independent assessment of D.C.’s work on pre-K education. An annual report on preschool education published by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) found that D.C. has “the highest percentage of children enrolled [in prekindergarten programs] at both ages 3 and 4 as well as the highest per-child spending [\$14,690]” (Barnett et al., 2013, p. 43). D.C.’s pre-K program meets 8 of the 10 quality standards identified by NIEER. The advocacy group DC Action for Children has also commented favorably on the push to make pre-K universal while also pursuing quality.<sup>34</sup>

The city’s efforts with respect to early childhood have been impressive. The city would benefit from further investigation of

- the availability of spaces in programs of quality in all wards and neighborhoods,
- the development of children under age 3, and
- the progress of systems for monitoring the quality of learning opportunities provided in all programs.

### K-12 Academic Offerings

We identified three topics that would give us a picture of the equity of K-12 students’ academic opportunities: students’ access to rigorous coursework, the supports offered to struggling students, and the adoption of the new Common Core standards. This part of our evaluation could only cover

<sup>33</sup>See <http://www.dcpsb.org/MISC/performance-report-glossary.aspx> [September 2014].

<sup>34</sup>See <http://www.dcactionforchildren.org/node/874> [September 2014].

DCPS, because neither PCSB nor any other entity monitors this set of questions for the charter schools. The focus of this section is on grades 9-12. Although earlier grades are equally important, most of the information we could obtain was for grades 9-12. In response to our questions, DCPS provided documentation, responses to specific questions, and some data. We obtained additional data from published reports prepared by advocacy and research organizations.

### Advanced Coursework

D.C.'s graduation requirements are the basis for the minimum offerings at all high schools: for example, students must complete at least one upper-level mathematics course to graduate, so every high school must offer one. For advanced mathematics, DCPS said the following courses are offered: algebra I, algebra II, algebra II and trigonometry, pre-calculus, elementary functions and geometry, advanced placement (AP) calculus, AP statistics, and chess. We note, however, that only some of these courses are usually considered advanced: the algebra sequence and geometry, for example, are generally considered standard mathematics coursework at the secondary level. In addition, we did not have data with which to examine the availability of these courses across schools or wards or whether the most advanced of these courses are available at every school. For advanced science courses, we requested but did not receive any information about the availability of courses offered.

DCPS reports on its website that at least four AP courses are offered at every traditional high school (i.e., all but the alternative schools; see below) and that every student who wants to take one can do so. DCPS pays the required examination fees and there are no requirements for enrollment.<sup>35</sup> The DCPS website also indicates that two high schools also offer the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme.

In response to our requests, DCPS officials provided us with a variety of data on AP course enrollment, exam-taking, and scores. Summative data for 2009-2010 through 2012-2013 show that AP participation increased during those years and that the percentage of exams taken that received a score of 3 or higher<sup>36</sup> increased slightly: see Table 5-6. DCPS gave us a list of AP and other courses offered at each of 15 DCPS high schools, as well as a spreadsheet with more detailed enrollment data. Tables 5-7 and 5-8 show the availability of AP courses across the wards and in individual high schools.

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<sup>35</sup>See <http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/Learn+About+Schools/Academic+Offerings#0> [February 2015].

<sup>36</sup>AP exams are scored on a 5-point scale and a score of 3 is usually the minimum for which colleges will grant advanced placement credits.

**TABLE 5-6** Advanced Placement Exam Taking

Exams Taken and Scores	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Number of Exam Takers	1,720	1,998	2,291	2,523
Number of Exams Taken	2,940	3,159	3,707	4,097
Number of Exams with Scores of 3, 4, or 5	808	984	1,117	1,269
Percentage of Exams with Scores of 3, 4 or 5	27	31.1	30.1	31

NOTE: Scores on AP exams range from 1 to 5.

SOURCE: Data provided to the committee by the DCPS Office of Teaching and Learning.

Table 5-7 shows how AP course-taking varies by ward: the number of unique courses offered for the wards, the number of students who registered for and actually took at least one of the courses, and how many special education students took at least one of the courses.<sup>37</sup> Table 5-8 shows the same information by individual DCPS school. More detailed analysis of the academic programs and other characteristics of the 14 high schools would be needed to fully explain the data, but a few points are striking. One is that Ward 3, with only one high school, has more AP class registrations than Ward 1, with four high schools (the largest number of high schools in any ward). However, it is important to remember that it is not clear how many students are represented multiple times in the respective totals; that is, it is possible that students in Ward 3 are more likely to enroll in multiple AP courses than other students. Another is that three schools, Columbia Heights, School Without Walls, and Wilson, stand out as having significantly more courses offered and more students represented in them than the other 12 schools.

A recent report prepared by the sponsor of the AP, the College Board, provides context for this information as well as some discussion of D.C.'s situation (College Board, 2014). The report confirms that AP exam-taking (as distinct from course-taking) has increased among D.C.'s public school students: in 2000, 22.2 percent of the city's high school students took at least one AP exam; in 2006, 55.7 percent did so. However, the city has the largest opportunity gap in the nation for black students. This group made up 81.8 percent of graduating seniors in 2013 but represented only 67 percent of AP exam takers (although this was an increase from the previous year).<sup>38</sup> Black students made up only 33.7 percent of exam takers who

<sup>37</sup>The city provided us with counts of sections offered—not unique courses offered—but we used the course titles to count unique courses offered.

<sup>38</sup>These data include all public school students.

TABLE 5-7 Advanced Placement Courses and Enrollment, by Ward

Ward and Schools	Total School Enrollment (2013)	Unique Courses Offered	Seats Taken	Registered	SPED Count <sup>d</sup>
Ward 1 (four high schools)	2,918	42	1,383	1,366	44
Benjamin Banneker HS	430	9	264	264	0
Cardozo EC	681	5	89	89	4
Columbia Heights EC	1,266	16	815	798	38
Ellington School of the Arts	541	12	215	215	2
Ward 2 (one high school)	585	21	787	783	2
School Without Walls	585	21	787	783	2
Ward 3 (one high school)	1,696	28	1,726 <sup>b</sup>	1,726	16
Wilson HS	1,696	28	1,726	1,726	16
Ward 4 (two high schools)	871	13	239	235	26
Coolidge HS	433	5	86	86	1
Roosevelt HS @ MacFarland	438	8	153	149	25
Ward 5 (three high schools)	1,621	25	575	573	11
Dunbar HS	628	6	113	111	4
McKinley Technology HS	674	11	389	389	6
Phelps ACE HS	319	8	73	73	1
Ward 6 (one high school)	783	6	174	171	4
Eastern HS	783	6	174	171	4
Ward 7 (one high school)	762	7	203	203	16
H.D. Woodson HS	762	7	203	203	16
Ward 8 (two high schools)	1,429	8	145	145	6
Anacostia HS	751	3	58	58	2
Ballou HS	678	5	87	87	4

NOTE: There are 35 Advanced Placement courses altogether; see [http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/courses/teachers\\_corner/index.html](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/courses/teachers_corner/index.html) [May 2015].

<sup>a</sup>Special education students enrolled.

<sup>b</sup>The AP registration count for Wilson High School exceeds the 2013 enrollment count.

SOURCE: Adapted from data provided to the committee by DCPS.

**TABLE 5-8** Advanced Placement Courses and Enrollment, by School

Schools (and Ward)	Total School Enrollment (2013)	Unique Courses Offered	Seats Taken in AP Classes	Registered for AP classes	SPED Count <sup>a</sup>
Anacostia HS (Ward 8)	751	3	58	58	2
Ballou HS (Ward 8)	678	5	87	87	4
Benjamin Banneker HS (Ward 1)	430	9	264	264	0
Cardozo EC (Ward 1)	681	5	89	89	4
Columbia Heights EC (Ward 1)	1,266	16	815	798	38
Coolidge HS (Ward 4)	433	5	86	86	1
Dunbar HS (Ward 5)	628	6	113	111	4
Eastern HS (Ward 6)	783	6	174	171	4
Ellington School of the Arts (Ward 1)	541	12	215	215	2
McKinley Technology HS (Ward 5)	674	11	389	389	6
Phelps ACE HS (Ward 5)	319	8	73	73	1
Roosevelt HS @ MacFarland (Ward 4)	438	8	153	149	25
School Without Walls HS (Ward 2)	585	21	787	783	2
Wilson HS (Ward 3)	1,696	28	1,726	1,726	16
H.D. Woodson HS (Ward 7)	762	18	203	203	16

<sup>a</sup>Special education students enrolled.

SOURCE: Adapted from data provided to the committee by DCPS.

scored a 3 or higher (which was a decrease from the previous year). The gap for low-income students in D.C. is also the greatest in the nation: students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch were 73 percent of all students but only 48.5 percent of exam takers and 36.4 percent of those who scored a 3 or higher.

Overall, the study reports that just 14 percent of D.C. students who took an AP exam in 2013 scored a 3 or higher (an increase from 8.9 percent in 2003): for comparison, the national average was 20.1 percent. As noted above, OSSE reported that 31 percent of exams taken received a score of 3 or higher, but it did not provide its own data on the percentage of students who scored a 3 or higher.

It may be that the notable gaps across schools and groups of students in both course-taking and achievement in AP courses correspond to many other issues for D.C. students. Students who have been struggling in school are unlikely to aspire to take an advanced course once they reach high school. Schools may respond to limited demand for AP courses by offering few of them. It is important to track differences across schools and wards and carefully analyze the reasons for them because they point to challenges across the grades.

The committee requested information from the city on measures to help prepare students in earlier grades to aspire to and succeed in advanced classes, but we did not receive it. We found no evidence on possible variation in the rigor with which advanced courses offered across the schools and wards are taught or about measures to prepare and support students who may not be as ready as their peers to succeed when they do enroll. D.C. would benefit from having systematic information about course availability, course-taking, and performance.

The availability of rigorous coursework in DCPS secondary schools seems to be uneven across wards and schools. We believe the city would benefit from systematic monitoring of the rigor of academic offerings that are covered, for K-12 DCPS and charter schools,

- strategies and resources for encouraging students at each level to pursue challenging academic opportunities;
- resources for supporting students who attempt challenging options, such as AP courses;
- implementation of rigorous curricula, such as AP courses; and
- indicators of student access to college and careers.

### Needs of Struggling Students

We had little information with which to assess efforts to support struggling students. DCPS provided some descriptive information, and we obtained some information from city websites. DCPS's overview of teaching and learning (District of Columbia Public Schools, 2014c) describes efforts to better coordinate specialized instruction with teaching and learning goals for all students. It also describes tools for supporting students, including: 9th-grade academies; the Agile Mind curriculum,<sup>39</sup> which helps students catch up as they enter high school; Response to Intervention,<sup>40</sup> an assessment-based program for targeting the skill gaps of individual students

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<sup>39</sup>See <http://www.agilemind.com/> [January 2014].

<sup>40</sup>See <http://www.rti4success.org/> [January 2014].

to try to reduce special education placements; and the provision of reading specialists for the lowest-performing students.

A DCPS official told us about a series of focus efforts the agency has made, first for elementary education, then for the middle grades, and most recently for high schools, but they did not provide documentation about these efforts.<sup>41</sup> Outcomes for black males have been a particular concern in the city: DCPS recently hired a senior staff person to focus on improving outcomes for these students and reported that it will invest \$20 million in support programs for black and Hispanic males (Brown, 2014b; Chandler, 2015c).<sup>42</sup> These efforts are occurring at a time when national attention has increasingly focused on the needs of these groups, for example, through the My Brother's Keeper initiative.<sup>43</sup>

DCPS has eight alternative high schools, which an official told us are schools designed to help the most challenged students complete their education. DCPS officials provided us with brief descriptions of each school: see Box 5-1. The information included data on course pass rates, attendance, and other indicators for some of them: see Table 5-9. These data show that 2,196 students are enrolled in these schools and that their academic performance and graduation rates are extremely low. We could not obtain any information on how students are guided to enroll in these schools, or detailed information about the academic and other programs that are available or the qualifications and training for the teachers who work with troubled students. We also could not obtain information on any charter schools that may specialize in serving young people who have had difficulty in traditional school settings.

A recent report from the DC Fiscal Policy Institute (2014), a nonprofit organization that studies budget and tax issues in the city, notes that the school funding formula for 2015 includes a new weight for students at risk of failure and other negative outcomes and also increases resources for adult and alternative education and for students with disabilities and English-language learners. The report says that the additional funding will support planned initiatives, including a longer school day in low-performing schools and enhancements to curriculum and staffing for the middle grades.

D.C. would benefit from having much more systematic information about students who struggle in school at every level, beginning with pre-K, and the ways schools support them. Key topics to track across DCPS and the charter schools include

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<sup>41</sup>See <http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/About+DCPS/Press+Releases+and+Announcements/General+Announcements/Chancellor+Henderson+wants+to+hear+from+you+regarding+middle+grades> [January 2014].

<sup>42</sup>See <http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/Beyond+the+Classroom/Empowering+Males+of+Color> [February 2015].

<sup>43</sup>See <http://www.whitehouse.gov/my-brothers-keeper> [February 2015].

**BOX 5-1**  
**DCPS Alternative High Schools**

These brief descriptions of DCPS's alternative high schools are adapted from information provided to the committee by DCPS and available on the DCPS website. The information is as of 2012-2013.

**Ballou STAY Senior High School**

Ballou High School was established in 1989 as an alternative high school for students ages 16 and older who require an alternative setting from that of a traditional high school. Ballou STAY offers full educational programming and a wide variety of options for students, from traditional high school courses to certificated diplomas. Ballou STAY also partners with local community colleges to provide post-diploma and post-certificate support and job preparedness.

**CHOICE Academy**

Choosing Higher Options for Individually Centered Education, CHOICE, provides at-risk students an educational plan that is tailored to meet their needs. Students who attend CHOICE have had some behavioral difficulties in their neighborhood schools. The goal of CHOICE is to work with students to make better decisions when they return to their neighborhood schools.

**Incarcerated Youth Program**

This program provides academic services to students ages 16-22 years old who are incarcerated at the D.C. jail. Students are able to continue to work toward their high school diploma and GED. Additionally, the program provides services to students receiving special education and a certification program in graphic design.

**Luke C. Moore Academy**

The mission of the Luke C. Moore Academy is to provide a competent and compassionate secondary educational setting for young people ages 16-20 who have dropped out of high school or had difficulties in traditional school settings. The academy provides each student with an individualized program that addresses both the academic and social emotional needs of the student. It challenges students to become educated, productive, and responsible contributors to society.

- indicators used to flag struggling students;
- resources available to support struggling students;
- outcomes for students, including referrals to special education, English-language learning, or school or community support services; and
- public engagement efforts related to supports for struggling students.

**Roosevelt STAY Senior High School**

The mission of Roosevelt STAY Senior High School is to deliver a high-quality academic and career or technical program in a student-centered, alternative environment that will lead to a high school diploma. The primary student population includes in-school day students enrolled in other high schools across the city who need to take additional classes in order to graduate on time, as well as older students returning to school. Students must be at least 16. Roosevelt STAY also offers programs for English-language learners, and GED preparatory and career pathway programs in culinary arts, computer repair, and hospitality.

**Twilight Program**

This program provides an innovative educational environment that meets the needs of at-risk youth. Students attend classes after the regular school day with a personalized schedule based on their individual needs. The program aims to create a positive learning environment in which every student can meet personal and academic goals.

**Washington Metropolitan High School**

This school was established in 2008 with a goal of providing students ages 15-19 with a high-quality education that is tailored to each student's specific needs. This educational programming prepares the student to become productive and successful members of society. The students receive extensive interventions in the curriculum for students with social and emotional needs. The high school uses a mix of in-class activities, online learning, and project-based learning.

**Youth Services Center**

The center provides educational services for students in grades 7-12 who have been detained by the juvenile justice system and are classified as wards of the state. Through creative scheduling, the center redirects learning for students and engages them in instructional activities and services needed for a smooth transition back to the community without lost instructional time. To meet the academic needs of at-risk students, it creates an environment that is conducive to learning, fosters academic excellence, builds character and caters instruction to each student's learning style.

**Adoption of the Common Core State Standards**

The city adopted new state learning standards in 2005 and also moved from using the SAT-9 assessment to the DC CAS in that year (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2013b). In 2010, as part of its application for federal Race to the Top grant funding, the city replaced its standards with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which will ap-

TABLE 5-9 Data on DCPS Alternative Schools

Alternative School	Ward	Total Enrolled	Grades Served	Graduation Rate (%)	Students Passing All Courses (%)
CHOICE Academy at Emery	5	9	6-12	—	—
Incarcerated Youth Program, Correctional Detention Facility	7	26	9-12	—	—
Luke C. Moore HS	5	364	9-12	37	78
Washington Metropolitan HS (formerly YEA)	1	280	9-12	38	59
Youth Services Center	5	89	6-12	—	—
Ballou STAY	8	578	Adult	—	58
Roosevelt STAY @ MacFarland	4	850	Adult	—	75

<sup>a</sup>Special education students enrolled.

SOURCE: Data from Office of the State Superintendent of Education (2013b), DCPS website (<http://profiles.dcps.dc.gov/> [May 2015]), and data supplied by DCPS.

ply to both DCPS and charter schools.<sup>44</sup> These changes are recent so we could obtain only a limited amount of information about how they are progressing.

DCPS has worked in phases to develop a curriculum aligned with the CCSS and complete the transition from the DC CAS to the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), an assessment designed to align with the CCSS, with the aim of completing the implementation by the 2014-2015 school year (see Chapter 3).<sup>45</sup> For science, which is not addressed in the CCSS, DCPS plans to align its science curriculum with the Next Generation Science Standards (Education Consortium for Re-

<sup>44</sup>The CCSS are K-12 standards in English-language arts and mathematics developed by states with the aim of providing rigorous and consistent standards. Forty-three states, D.C., four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity have adopted the standards. For information about the CCSS, see <http://www.corestandards.org/> [March 2015]. For information about political controversy with respect to the standards, see [http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/07/09/36commoncore\\_ep.h33.html?r=150710036&preview=1](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/07/09/36commoncore_ep.h33.html?r=150710036&preview=1) [March 2015].

<sup>45</sup>An overview of DCPS's implementation plans, and the standards, can be found at <http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/In+the+Classroom/What+Students+Are+Learning/DCPS+Common+Core+State+Standards#7> [October 2014].

Students with 90% Attendance (%)	SPED Count <sup>a</sup> (%)	Reduced-Price Lunch (%)	Below Proficient Math (%)	Proficient Math (%)	Below Proficient Reading (%)	Proficient Reading (%)
—	0	99	—	—	—	—
—	46	—	—	—	—	—
58	8	99	87	13	81	19
34	14	99	92	8	84	16
—	30	—	—	—	—	—
59	5	39	—	—	—	—
9	3	57	—	—	—	—

search and Evaluation, 2013b).<sup>46</sup> The DCPS website provides information about its implementation of the CCSS, including links developed by OSSE that compare the previous D.C. standards with the CCSS.<sup>47</sup>

A city official familiar with special education told us that the goals for individualized education plans (IEPs), required for special education students, have now also been mapped to the CCSS, and that DCPS expected to have all elementary and middle teachers trained accordingly,<sup>48</sup> although we were not able to learn the timetable for this training. The IEP crosswalk, the official explained, will allow teachers to take a CCSS goal for a particular grade, link it to relevant IEP goals, and differentiate as appropriate. The Office of Specialized Instruction is currently working with a contractor to develop tools for measuring special education students' progress with respect to the CCSS.

The U.S. Department of Education has monitored the implementation of the CCSS in all states that applied for funding in the Race to the Top initiative. In looking at the department's information, the Education Con-

<sup>46</sup> The Next Generation Science Standards were developed by the National Research Council, the National Science Teachers Association, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and Achieve, Inc. They are based on research on science and science learning.

<sup>47</sup> See <http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/In+the+Classroom/What+Students+Are+Learning/DCPS+Common+Core+State+Standards> [October 2014]. The OSSE CCSS webpage and crosswalks are at <http://osse.dc.gov/service/common-core-state-standards> [October 2014].

<sup>48</sup> For more information, see <https://goalbookapp.com> [October 2014].

sortium for Research and Evaluation (2013b) noted some struggles in D.C. in its first year, including difficulty coordinating across the charter schools and staff turnover at OSSE that delayed rollout of resources to support CCSS implementation. By the second year, however, some of these issues had been corrected, and the department noted that professional development and other supports provided by OSSE were in place. (See Chapter 3 for a discussion of a collaboration between DCPS and the charter schools to align instruction with the CCSS.)

A report by the newspaper *Education Week* (Education First and Editorial Projects in Education, 2013) on the adoption and implementation of the CCSS across the states rated D.C. as having completed its implementation plans for teacher professional development, preparation of curriculum guides/instructional materials, and teacher evaluation systems by 2012, and categorized its plans in all three areas as “fully developed” (pp. 8, 10, 12). A four-part series in *Education Week* (Gewertz, 2013) that examined the implementation of the CCSS in one DCPS school suggested that the transition was perceived as sudden in that school, and that not all teachers and principals felt prepared, particularly those working with the most disadvantaged students. The series described the sorts of challenges teachers and others have faced, as well as some signs of progress, particularly the improved capacity to identify and address weaknesses in student learning. We note that two reports on CCSS implementation across the country both suggest that the process is challenging and that states are moving gradually through it (Council of Great City Schools, 2014a; Rentner and Kober, 2014).

Topics to monitor with respect to implementation of the new standards include

- the implementation of CCCS in all schools, both DCPS and charters; and
- ongoing professional development for DCPS and charter educators related to the implementation of the CCSS.

### Promoting On-Time Graduation and College Success

D.C.’s public schools have had among the worst on-time graduation rates in the country.<sup>49</sup> For the class of 2014, the overall rate was 61 percent, compared with the national average of 81 percent (Chandler, 2014d). For DCPS schools, the graduation rate was 58 percent—up 2 percentage points from the previous year; for the charter schools, it was 69 percent—down almost 7 points.

<sup>49</sup>See <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014391.pdf> [May 2015].

We could find only limited data on postsecondary enrollment and college completion. The nonprofit college counseling organization, DC College Access, reports that in 2013, 58 percent of graduates of DCPS and charter schools had enrolled in college in the year after they graduated from high school (District of Columbia College Access Program, 2013). This publication also reports that the percentage of public school students who had enrolled in college had increased from 33 percent in 1999.<sup>50</sup>

Graduation rates vary across student groups. A U.S. Department of Education study reported in 2012 that graduation rates for black and Hispanic males in D.C. were 38 and 46 percent, respectively: the numbers represent a 50 percent gap between black and white males and a 42 percent gap between Hispanic and white males (Holzman, 2012).<sup>51</sup> We discuss trends in graduation rates in Chapter 6; here we focus on steps the city has taken to promote graduation and postsecondary attainment, though again, we could obtain relatively little information to assess.

In 2012, SBOE proposed new graduation requirements that were intended to increase rigor (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2013b). The total credits required would increase from 24 to 26, and students would have to complete a thesis or culminating project. Students would have to complete at least two credits designated as college or career preparatory. Other changes included reducing social studies requirements by one credit and elective requirements by one-half credit, increasing the requirement for visual and performing arts by one credit, and increasing the requirement for physical education by one-half credit. SBOE is currently soliciting public feedback on a revised version of the requirements.<sup>52</sup> We did not review the proposed changes in detail but note that increasing the requirements will likely make it more difficult for students who are already struggling to meet the existing ones to graduate on time. The city has also focused attention on the progress of students through the earlier grades to better prepare them to meet high school and graduation expectations.

A report prepared by DME (Tembo, 2014) analyzed D.C. students' high school outcomes to identify when and why they tend to get off track for graduation. It identifies programs and schools that have been effective in helping students get back on track and suggests citywide strategies for coordinating efforts and investments, highlighting the importance of developing an early warning system for the jurisdiction.

In response to our requests for information, DCPS officials provided

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<sup>50</sup>The report does not indicate the source of these data.

<sup>51</sup>The Holzman report indicates that "graduation rates are calculated as the percentage of the students enrolled in 9th grade receiving a diploma four years later, estimated from state data and National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data, or estimated from historical trends (2012, p. 7)."

<sup>52</sup>See <http://sboe.dc.gov/GraduationRequirementsandDiplomaOptions> [February 2015].

us with a summary of several actions the agency has taken to improve college readiness. One is to encourage students to take the SAT and ACT college entrance examinations by providing access to free test preparation resources and covering the cost of taking the PSAT (preliminary SAT) for students in grades 9 through 11. They also told us that DCPS offers 27 career and technical education programs in 17 schools, which cover 11 career clusters. They reported that the programs served 5,352 students in grades 9-12 in 2012-2013.

OSSE's Division of Postsecondary and Career Education has several programs to support students, including a tuition assistance grant program, an application program that provides enrichment for high-achieving students who have financial need, and a dual enrollment program (through which high school students may take college-level courses). We did not have information to determine whether there is coordination across agencies to collect information about students' needs and trajectories, or about the availability of resources to support them in preparing for postsecondary endeavors. We discuss in Chapter 6 the data needed to better understand postsecondary attainment and outcomes. The city would benefit from having data about several indicators:

- postsecondary attainment (see Chapter 6);
- access to higher education (including not only colleges and universities, as well as community colleges and training programs and apprenticeships; and
- college readiness, such as the need for remediation after college enrollment.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Our evaluation of conditions for learning concentrated on a few key issues. The limited evidence we could examine suggests that there are differences across student groups and wards in access to educational opportunity and in supports that address specific needs. External assessments of the equity of educational opportunity in D.C. reinforce our impression that the city has work to do. For example, a 2009 ranking placed D.C. 51st among the states on basic indicators of opportunity to learn.<sup>53</sup> Also, a 2015 state-by-state ranking conducted by *Education Week*—which gives grades for the chance for success, school finance, and K-12 achievement—gave D.C. an overall grade of C– in comparison with a national average grade of C (Education Week Research Center, 2015).

There is also evidence of numerous efforts to address these problems,

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<sup>53</sup>See <http://www.otlcampaign.org/state-updates/district-columbia> [September 2014].

but the apparent variation across the city's wards is particularly concerning. We requested that the city provide any available data by ward, but we received such data in only a very few cases, and most of the ward-level information we were able to find was from sources other than the city. The evidence we did obtain indicated striking disparities. We were not able to probe more deeply and understand how the countless decisions that resulted in these disparities—such as that between Wilson High School, with 29 AP courses, and Anacostia, with 3—have been made or to examine the implementation of the efforts that agencies report they are making to address them. Although there are signs of significant efforts to improve, there is still considerable work to be done to ensure that all students receive equitable opportunities to learn.

**CONCLUSION 5-1** There is evidence of efforts to improve learning conditions in the city's public schools, but there is also evidence of notable disparities in students' educational experiences across student groups and wards.

Our survey of these topics made clear that D.C.'s education agencies collect a great deal of information about students and schools (mostly for DCPS) but that (1) information about many important topics is incomplete, (2) much of the available information is not systematically reviewed or analyzed, and (3) much of the available information is not made publicly available.

We did find evidence of instances in which an agency, sometimes in collaboration with other agencies, has collected and analyzed data in a particular area and developed an approach based on that analysis to bring about improvement. Attention to early childhood education is an example of the results of sustained efforts to understand and address a need; recent attention to truancy is an area that shows promise. In other cases, agency staff may be working to address an issue but lack adequate resources or the opportunity to link their efforts to citywide resources and approaches: one such example is approaches to the education of English-language learners. There may well be other promising efforts under way among the agencies that did not come to our attention.

The committee recognizes that this sort of coordination is a challenge in any public school system, and that D.C. faces added complications, because it functions as both a school district and a state and because its charter sector is large. Nevertheless, the issues we have discussed here are linked to one another, and they are especially important because the city's public school students move across schools and wards and back and forth between DCPS and charter schools. We believe that a coordinated approach to monitoring learning conditions would be a critical support for the city's

ongoing efforts to improve opportunities for all students, attend effectively to students with extra needs, and reduce achievement gaps.

Monitoring a concept as broad as “learning conditions” would certainly be a challenging task. There are hundreds of indicators a school system might track, and identifying the most useful ones would require judgments about priorities and technical decisions about data collection. Making use of such indicators would require significant capacity for analysis and thoughtful planning and decision making. One existing structure for monitoring indicators that could be a helpful start for D.C. is available from the Council of Great City Schools (2014b), which has developed a set of performance indicators—mostly concerned with management and operations—that are tracked in schools districts all over the country so that districts can compare themselves and identify best practices.<sup>54</sup>

Because the city has 62 districts, we suggest that monitoring of critical aspects of learning opportunity might logically be a state responsibility in D.C. Although state education agencies vary in their responsibilities and approaches, it is clear that every state has a responsibility to look across all public school students and schools to make sure that certain basic conditions are met. In D.C., there is no single entity that is looking analytically at the way all the public school students are being educated. We do not suggest that a state-level entity should interfere with the way any of the DCPS or charter schools make most of their decisions. Rather, we suggest that the city would benefit if there were state-level objectives in a few areas for which specific plans of action were required. The entity responsible for this strategic thinking would collect data about progress in these areas and make those data readily available so that others could test the effectiveness of the approaches.

The model described in the Phase I report (National Research Council, 2011) includes monitoring key indicators on a regular basis to track trends over time and then conducting focused analysis on areas that emerge as problems. That report noted that it is for the city to determine the areas of greatest importance for monitoring.

**CONCLUSION 5-2** The governance structure with respect to learning opportunities in the city’s schools is diffuse. No one body has both the responsibility and the authority for monitoring the provision of education and supports for students, particularly those at risk for school failure, across DCPS and the charter schools. Oversight of the ways all public schools are addressing the needs of these students is variable and in some cases minimal.

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<sup>54</sup>The public reports list districts by code so that districts cannot be publicly identified. We were told by city officials that D.C. does not participate in this data collection effort.

**CONCLUSION 5-3** To effectively pursue the goal of ensuring that all students have an equitable opportunity to learn, the city will need to maintain, and make publicly accessible, systematic data for three topics:

1. **Students with particular needs, including those with disabilities, English-language learners, and students in poverty.** Topics to monitor include compliance with federal requirements, provision of appropriate education and supports, identification of students in need of support, and the availability of educators with needed credentials and expertise.
2. **School climate, including discipline, attendance, safety, and facilities.** Topics to monitor include trends over time; the nature and magnitude of problems; distribution of problems across schools, wards, and LEAs; availability of relevant professional development; outcomes for students affected by problems in these areas; and indicators of equity in facilities and resources, such as technological supports, classroom capacity, and other essential building components.
3. **Academic supports for learning.** Topics to monitor include equity of access to rigorous coursework at all grade levels; access to supports for struggling students; and access to resources designed to promote on-time graduation, college success, and successful career entry.

For each of these topics, information that is useful and accessible to researchers, educators, parents, and the public should be readily available. It should be presented in a way that allows comparisons over time and analysis of patterns for aggregated and disaggregated student groups, including students in DCPS and charter schools and students and schools across wards.

A good deal of this information is already collected—likely much more than we were able to identify—but we did not see evidence that these basic aspects of the opportunity to learn are systematically monitored for all students and schools. Furthermore, PERAA called for the creation of an inter-agency coordination body so that all of the city agencies concerned with the well-being of children, young people, and families could share data and coordinate their efforts both to help individuals and families and also to develop and implement policies designed to address problems. That body does not exist, as we discuss in Chapter 3. A part of the PERAA requirement was that the city develop a comprehensive warehouse for data that allows users to examine trends over time, aggregate and disaggregate data about students and student groups, and coordinate data across time and across agencies, and that requirement also has not been met (see Conclusion 3-1, in Chapter 3).



## 6

## Outcomes

The ultimate goal of the Public Education Reform Amendment Act (PERAA)—and the strategies adopted by the city as it implemented the law—was to improve outcomes for students in the city’s public schools. The committee was asked to evaluate whether valued outcomes were attained overall and for diverse schools and students. We had planned to examine a wide range of outcomes for students but that was not possible because of lack of data. The only indicators of student progress that we could use were test scores and graduation rates. Although we had access to data about performance on college entrance exams, we had questions about their accuracy and validity. We specifically looked for data on postsecondary outcomes, such as workforce participation or college enrollment, but this information was not available.

In this chapter we discuss test score data from the District of Columbia Comprehensive Assessment System (DC CAS) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and graduation rates. Psychometric information about DC CAS was available in technical reports prepared by the city’s test development contractor, CTB/McGraw-Hill. DC CAS performance data were also available in technical reports and on city websites, such as LearnDC. The Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation (DC-EdCORE) also conducted analyses and prepared a report on student achievement (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2014c). These analyses examined changes in DC CAS scores over time, controlling for changes in the demographic characteristics of student cohorts from year to year (discussed below). Graduation rates were provided by the city and have also recently been added to the LearnDC website. They are

also available from the Common Core of Data of the National Center for Education Statistics.

### STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: DC CAS DATA

DC CAS was the foundation for the city's accountability system from 2006, before PERAA, until 2014, when the city made its transition to the Partnership for Assessment for Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), an assessment that is aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).<sup>1</sup> The DC CAS assessment consisted of tests in reading, mathematics, science, and composition. The reading test was given to students in grades 2-10, and the mathematics test was given to students in grades 2-8 and 10.<sup>2</sup> The tests of science and composition were given once in each grade span (elementary, middle, and high school).<sup>3</sup> For science, elementary students took the test in grade 5 and middle school students did so in grade 8. High school students took a biology test during the school year in which they took a biology course. The composition assessment was given in grades 4, 7, and 10.

The reading, mathematics, science, and biology tests consisted of multiple-choice and constructed-response questions that were administered under standardized conditions. The composition test consisted of a single essay prompt designed to measure three dimensions: in grades 4 and 10, those dimensions were (1) topic development, (2) language conventions, and (3) understanding literary text. In grade 7, the first two dimensions were the same, and (3) was understanding of informational text.

Multiple-choice questions were scored electronically. Constructed-response questions and the essay for the composition test were scored by readers hired by the testing contractor. The composition test was scored three separate times, using three separate scoring rubrics that each covered one of the dimensions of the text.

The test results were reported on a 100-point scale, with the score scale increasing in 100-point increments across grades. That is, the score range for grade 2 was 200 to 299, for grade 3 it was 300 to 399, and so on to a maximum of 900 to 999 for the highest grade in which the test was given. Scaled scores were grouped into four performance levels: below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced. The cut scores for each level were determined using standard-setting procedures.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>PARCC tests cover mathematics and English-language arts; see Chapter 5. Also see <http://osse.dc.gov/service/dc-cas> [January 2014].

<sup>2</sup>Assessments for grade 2 began in 2013. In 2011, reading was expanded to grade 9 as well.

<sup>3</sup>These tests are also being replaced: see <http://osse.dc.gov/service/dc-cas> [February 2015].

<sup>4</sup>A cut score is the level that marks the difference between any two performance levels, such as proficient and advanced. For details, see, for example, CTB/McGraw-Hill (2012, p. 49; 2013, p. 48).

The transition to the new standards has been gradual. When DC CAS was first introduced in 2006, the questions were developed to be aligned with the city's content standards. The district replaced those standards with the CCSS in 2010 and began the process of adjusting the DC CAS reading and mathematics tests to align with the new standards. By spring 2012, questions on the DC CAS reading test were fully aligned to the CCSS. Questions on the DC CAS mathematics test were partially aligned in 2012 and fully aligned in 2013.<sup>5</sup> Although the city and its test development contractor, CTB/McGraw-Hill, made efforts to maintain the comparability of the tests during this transition, it is important to keep these changes in mind when comparing trend data.

Since the DC CAS test scores are the data that have been used for a number of high-stakes decisions in the district (e.g., measures of adequate yearly progress,<sup>6</sup> teacher evaluation) as well as to monitor trends, it is important to examine the tests' psychometric qualities to determine if the scores have provided reliable and valid evidence to support the decisions based on them. That is, did the tests measure what they were intended to measure? Were the technical and statistical aspects of test design handled in a way that would support inferences about student achievement growth and estimates of the value added by teachers?

### Technical Features of DC CAS

As is standard practice for large-scale testing programs, technical reports were prepared after each administration to document psychometric details about the test. The city contracted with CTB/McGraw-Hill to handle test development and analysis for the DC CAS and contractor staff wrote the technical reports. The city provided us with the technical reports for the test administrations in 2009-2013, but not the one for 2014.<sup>7</sup>

The DC CAS technical reports generally contain the information typically found in such reports. A useful feature of the DC CAS reports is that they connect the information provided to the requirements specified in the version of the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests*

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<sup>5</sup>The partial alignment was accomplished by (1) comparing the D.C. standards with the CCSS and identifying the areas of overlap; (2) using questions that measured the standards that overlapped as well as the other D.C. standards that were not in the CCSS; and (3) not measuring standards that were unique to CCSS (i.e., not in the D.C. standards). The plan was to eventually adopt these changes into both instruction and assessment.

<sup>6</sup>Adequate yearly progress is a standard for improvement in standardized test scores established in the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002, which is a gauge of the performance of individual schools and districts.

<sup>7</sup>Most of the reports are available at <http://osse.dc.gov/publication/dc-cas-technical-reports> [January 2015]. We requested the 2014 manual from OSSE but did not receive it.

that was current at the time (American Psychological Association et al., 1999).<sup>8</sup> A thorough evaluation of the technical aspects of DC CAS is beyond our charge, but we note that the reports provide detailed information about item development and assembly of test forms, evidence of reliability and validity, scaling and equating procedures, analyses of differential item functioning (bias), standard setting, and results. However, there are several issues that we highlight because they affect the types of inferences that can be made from the results.

### Comparability of Scores

As is typical for state assessments, DC CAS scores were statistically “equated”<sup>9</sup> so that the scores for a certain subject in a certain grade could be compared across years. For example, results for grade 4 reading in 2006 are on the same scale as grade 4 reading in 2007, and so on for subsequent years. This procedure is called “horizontal equating” (or horizontal linking) and supports comparisons, for example, between one year’s 4th graders’ performance on a given test and that of another year’s 4th graders.

It is important to note that the way the scores were linked does not support comparisons of an individual student’s score from one grade to the next (e.g., a student’s score in 4th-grade reading to his or her score in 5th-grade reading). There is another type of linking, called vertical linking, that would support such comparisons. This type of linking was not used for DC CAS, although the nature of the score scale (increasing in 100-point increments across grades) seems to suggest that it does.<sup>10</sup> Simply calculating the difference between a 3rd-grade score and a 4th-grade score does not yield meaningful information.

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<sup>8</sup>A new version of these standards was recently released (American Educational Research Association et al., 2014), so future technical reports are expected to be aligned with these revised standards.

<sup>9</sup>“For any two tests, a *link* between their scores is a transformation from a score on one to a score on the other. Equating is one type of linking that comes with strong assumptions. The purpose of equating is to allow the scores from the two tests to be used interchangeably, as if they had come from the same test. Equating requires that the tests must measure the same construct at the same level of difficulty and with the same degree of accuracy” (Holland and Dorans, 2006, pp. 187, 193).

<sup>10</sup>The DC CAS was designed so that two tests of the same subject matter developed for different grades (e.g., reading tests for grades 4 and 5) would be considered as measuring similar constructs with the same level of accuracy, but varying in their difficulty. Those for the lower grade would be designed to be easier than those for the higher grade. In this situation, the tests do not meet the requirements for equating. If the designers of DC CAS had put scores onto a common overall scale so that progress could be tracked across years, it would have been done through the statistical procedure called vertical linking (Holland and Dorans, 2006, p. 192).

### Issues with the Composition Test

The DC CAS composition test consisted of a single sample of student writing, an essay that received three scores (one for each dimension of the assessment domain covered; see above). Research shows that scores based on such a limited example of a student's writing skills tend to have low reliability (see Lane, 2006). The contractor's technical report provides estimates of score reliability, but they are based on rater agreement: that is, the estimates reflect the extent to which scores generalize across raters. They do not provide information about the extent to which scores generalize across tasks or prompts (the likelihood a student would receive the same score on a written response to a different prompt); variability across prompts is generally considered a greater source of measurement error than variability across raters (Lane, 2006). There is no evidence in the technical reports of how comparable the prompts are to one another. Thus, changes in scores across time may reflect differences in the characteristics of the prompts (such as in their difficulty) or in the rhetorical tasks required, as well as in test takers' proficiency in writing.

Another issue is that in 2012 two changes were made to the test (CTB/McGraw-Hill, 2012, p. 49). One change was that the pool of writing prompts was refreshed with new prompts. No data are provided on the extent to which these prompts are comparable to the prior ones, and thus comparisons from 2011 or earlier to 2012 or later are questionable.

The second change was in the procedures used to determine scale scores for the composition test. Prior to 2012, the score for composition was a simple sum of the scores from the two rubrics, and the cut scores for the performance levels were based on this scale. In 2012, the city implemented procedures to adjust for differences in the difficulty level of the essay prompts given from one year to the next. They did this by using questions on the reading test.<sup>11</sup> This procedure is used by other testing programs when more standard kinds of linking are not possible, but it is not ideal. The consequence is that the composition score reflects a student's achievement in reading as well as in writing. These limitations should be kept in mind when making inferences about the composition scores and tracking scores across time (i.e., comparing results from before 2012 with later ones).

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<sup>11</sup>For a number of reasons, it is not possible to use the same kinds of linking procedures for a test that consists of a single essay prompt as are used for tests with multiple prompts or questions. Because skills in reading and writing are interrelated, test developers sometimes use the reading questions to help scale the scores on a written essay prompt. In this case, the reading questions serve as an "anchor set" of questions for scaling the writing score.

### Interpreting Performance Trends

The committee identified three issues related to interpreting score trends. When students leave or enter the system, the resulting changes in the composition of the group taking the test can produce changes in test scores that are confounded with those caused by changes in students' learning. That is, simple comparisons of achievement for two cohorts (i.e., comparing those in 4th grade one year with those in 4th grade the previous year) can be affected by differences in the demographic composition of the two cohorts.

Demographic change is an issue for all cross-cohort comparisons, but it is especially important in D.C., which has had a highly mobile and changing student population in the years since PERAA (Tatian and Lei, 2013). DCPS enrollment decreased and then stabilized, while charter school enrollment went up significantly (see Chapter 2). The percentage of students who are from economically disadvantaged families also may have fluctuated over the period we examined (see Chapter 2 for a discussion of the measures of economic disadvantage). Although researchers can adjust for some of the demographic changes in D.C., and the differential demographic changes for DCPS and the charter schools—for example, they can look at test score trends just for students from lower-income families of a given race or ethnic group—such adjustments do not capture all the differences in student and family characteristics over time and between school sectors. Although such adjusted measures are preferable to overall trend measures that do not attempt to account for differences in student background characteristics, their limitations need to be kept in mind. These comparisons are discussed below.

Second, the primary data point reported for DC CAS is the proficiency rate—the percentage of all students scoring at the proficient level or above—across grades. Although most states report a single overall proficiency rate by grade for groups of students (a requirement of NCLB), there are many downsides to focusing on a single point in the score distribution. The most obvious drawback is that reporting only the proficiency rate provides no information about the other parts of the score distribution. For example, if students improved from far below proficient to just below proficient, their gains would not be measured by changes in proficiency rates. There are other options for reporting that yield information about the full distribution of scores, such as the mean and standard deviation of the scale scores, the scores associated with the quintiles in the distribution (20th, 40th, 60th, 80th percentiles), or even the percentage scoring at each performance level. If more than one of these summary measures is reported the results can be better understood.

Third, in 2009 there were numerous allegations of cheating on the DC CAS, and the reported gains in test scores were questioned. The city inves-

**BOX 6-1**  
**Test Security Issues with the DC CAS**

Beginning in 2011, public attention increasingly focused on the possibility that significant violations of test security may have compromised administrations of the DC CAS, with attention particularly focused on the 2009 results. As the committee began examining the use of DC CAS results in our evaluation, we became concerned that such compromises might affect our ability to make inferences from the test scores. We therefore requested information from the city about the alleged violations and the city's response, and we also looked for other sources of information. We held a public meeting in 2012, at which we heard from a journalist who had investigated serious violations in the Atlanta public schools; the Director of Testing Integrity at the Educational Testing Service, who described best practices for preventing security violations; and an assessment expert who has studied means of investigating and resolving possible violations.

D.C. did not provide us with complete documentation of the magnitude of the possible violations, but from what we could determine and what OSSE officials told us, the alleged violations were likely not widespread enough to have affected citywide scoring levels, which removed the primary reason for our concern. OSSE officials told us about new test security measures that have been introduced in D.C. schools, which are available on their website.<sup>a</sup>

We note that evidence from around the country, for example, as reported by the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* and *USA Today*, suggests that cheating on high-stakes tests is a widespread and a serious problem.

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<sup>a</sup>See <http://osse.dc.gov/service/test-security-and-incident-forms> [March 2015]. For a comprehensive set of documents related to the allegations, see <http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/73991-day-three-documents#document/p53> [February 2015].

tigated the allegations and conducted analyses of the scores in question.<sup>12</sup> After that investigation, all of the questions that were administered in 2009 were eliminated from further use (CTB/McGraw-Hill, 2010). There was no clear resolution to the allegations, and we were not able to form independent conclusions about what took place. However, the city subsequently took a number of steps to improve test security: Box 6-1 summarizes the committee's efforts to understand this situation.

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<sup>12</sup>See <http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/73991-day-three-documents#document/p53> [January 2015].

### Performance Trends: Overview

With this context in mind, we turn to a detailed look at the DC CAS results.<sup>13</sup> Figure 6-1 shows the percentage of students in D.C. who scored at or above the proficient level between 2009 and 2014 for reading and math. From 2009 to 2012, the proficiency rate for reading remained between 45 and 46 percent and then increased to 49 percent in 2013 and to 50 percent in 2014. In math, the proficiency rate showed steady improvement, from 46 percent in 2009 to 55 percent in 2014.

This kind of presentation can be a useful tool for communicating some information about the overall performance of the city's schools. However, when only the proficiency rate is reported and rates are aggregated across grades, the information is at a level that is too high to be useful in making policy or instructional decisions, and it can mask important achievement patterns or gaps (Holland and Dorans, 2006). To be useful, the data reported should include, at a minimum, the percentage of students scoring at each performance level, as well as the average and standard deviation of scale scores. The data should also be disaggregated by grade level and by various population groups.

Figure 6-2 provides an example of more detailed trend data. It shows the percentage of students who scored at each performance level for reading for 2009-2014. Progress in reading achievement has been slow (as has been the case in other states): the percentages of students scoring below basic and basic have decreased and the percentages scoring in the proficient level have increased, but there was little growth in the percentages at the advanced level.

In contrast, there has been fairly steady progress in math achievement, with fewer students scoring in the basic and below basic categories each year and increasing numbers scoring in both the proficient and advanced categories: see Figure 6-3. For the composition test, there was no clear pattern across grades and years: see Figure 6-4. In addition, for the composition test, there was a distinct difference in the distribution for 2011 in comparison with 2012 and 2013, most likely because of the addition of new prompts and the change in the way the composition scores are scaled (see discussion above).

Figure 6-5 shows the percentage of students who scored at each performance level in reading by gender and race and ethnicity and by status as economically disadvantaged, as an English-language learner, and as a student with a disability. Figure 6-6 shows similar information for math. There are stark differences in the performance distribution across the vari-

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<sup>13</sup>For an example, see <http://www.learnDC.org/schoolprofiles/view?s=dc#reportcard> [February 2015].

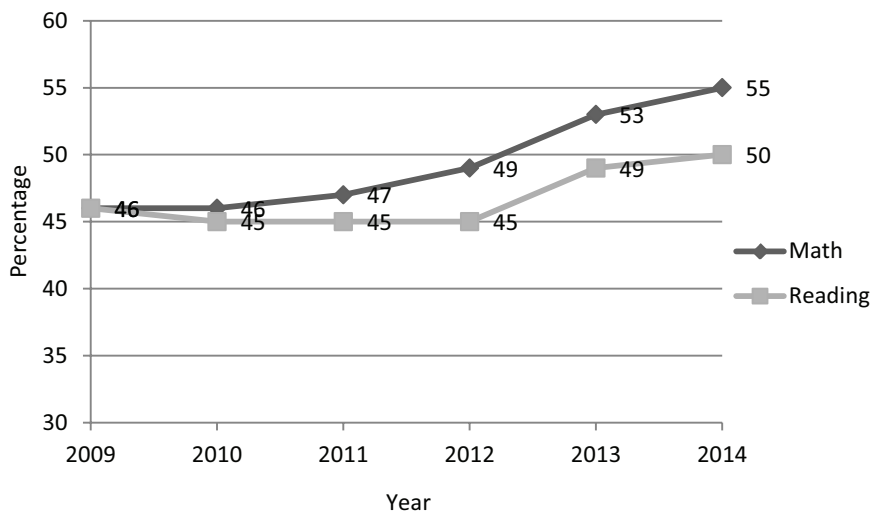


FIGURE 6-1 Percentage of students who scored proficient and above on DC CAS reading and math: 2009-2014.

SOURCE: Data from Office of the State Superintendent of Education (2014a).

ous population groups in both subjects, as can be seen in a comparison of the percentages of black students in the lower two categories (below basic and basic) to the percentages of white students in those categories. Furthermore, within most groups there was very little change in the score distributions over time.

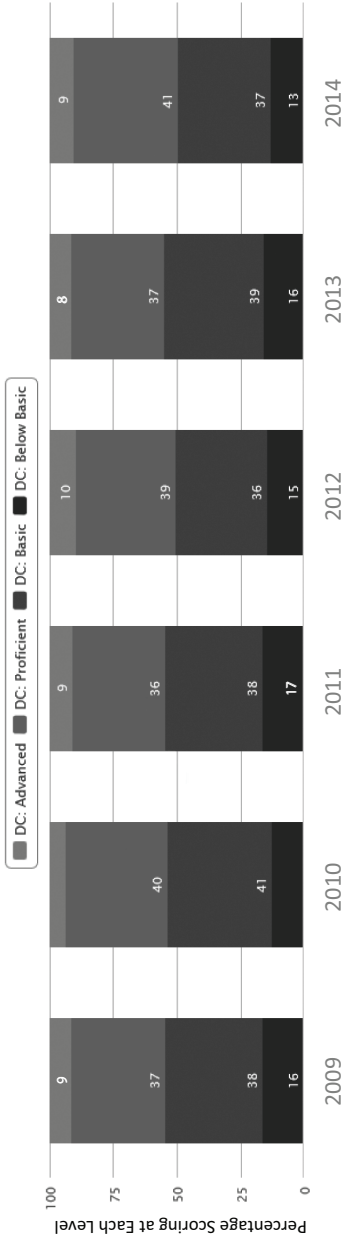
Analysis of average, cross-grade trends across the city's eight wards showed similar broad patterns, with reading gains concentrated in the first few post-PERAA years and modest gradual improvement in math across all wards.

Appendix F provides additional details about performance on DC CAS.

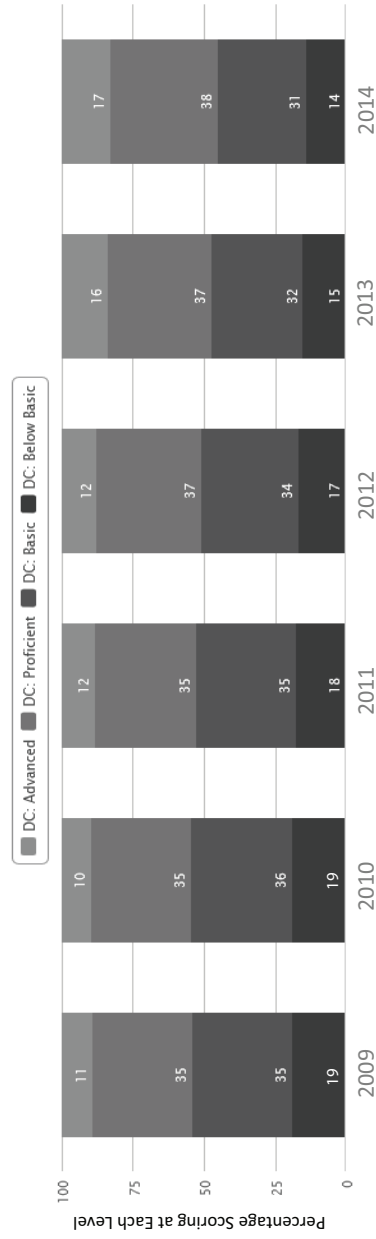
### Performance Trends: By School Sector and Students' Characteristics

Looking at outcomes by school sectors, Figures 6-7 and 6-8 show proficiency rates in reading and math, respectively, for DCPS and charter school students from 2007 through 2014. For that period in both sectors, data from OSSE show increases in the percentage of students scoring proficient or above.<sup>14</sup> In math, the proficiency rate for DCPS students increased

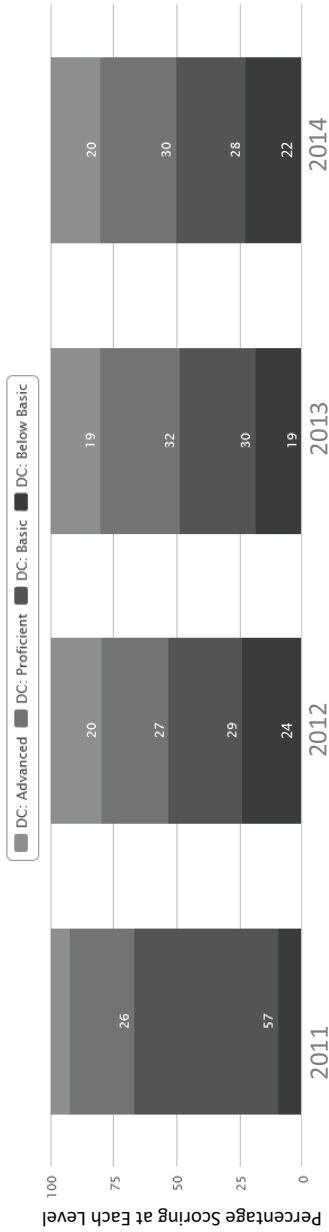
<sup>14</sup>See [http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2014%20DC%20CAS%20Result%20July%2031%202014...FINAL\\_.pdf](http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2014%20DC%20CAS%20Result%20July%2031%202014...FINAL_.pdf) [February 2015].



**FIGURE 6-2** Percentage of students who scored at each performance level on DC CAS reading: 2009-2014.  
 SOURCE: Data from LearnDC at <http://www.learnDC.org> [May 2015].



**FIGURE 6-3** Percentage of students who scored at each performance level on DC CAS math: 2009-2014.  
 SOURCE: Data from LearnDC at <http://www.learnDC.org> [May 2015].



**FIGURE 6-4** Percentage of students who scored at each performance level on DC CAS composition: 2011-2014.  
 SOURCE: Data from LearnDC at <http://www.learnDC.org> [May 2015].

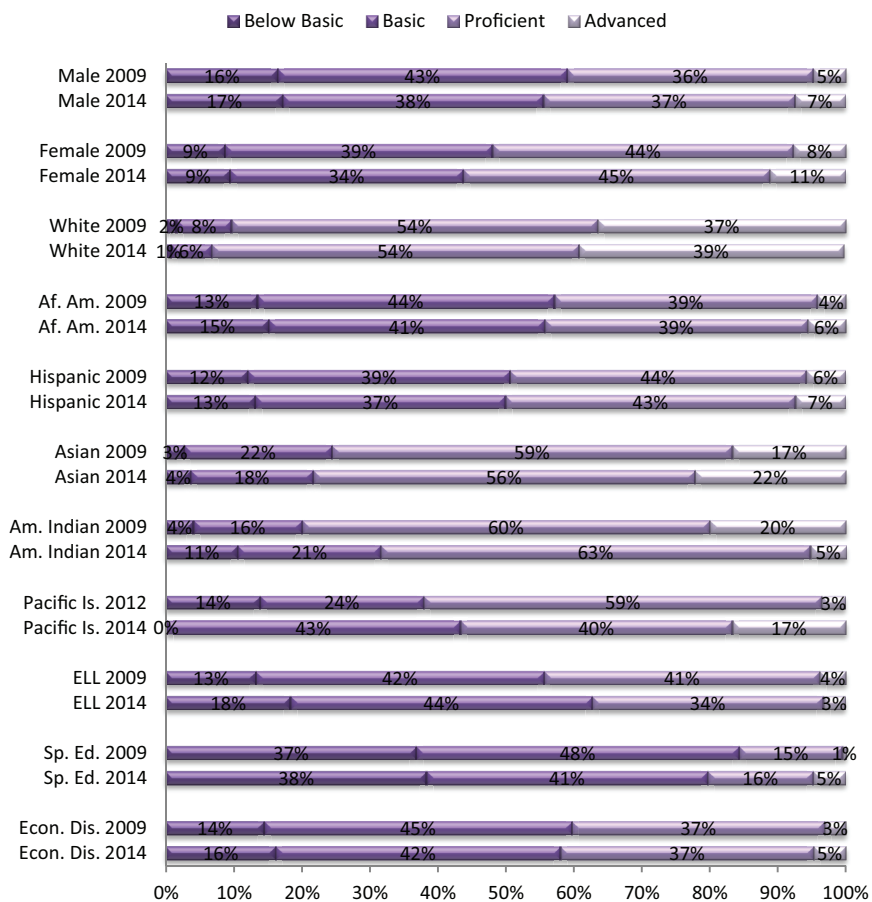


FIGURE 6-5 Percentage of student groups scoring at each performance level for DC CAS reading 2009 and 2014.

SOURCE: Data from LearnDC at <http://www.learndc.org> [May 2015].

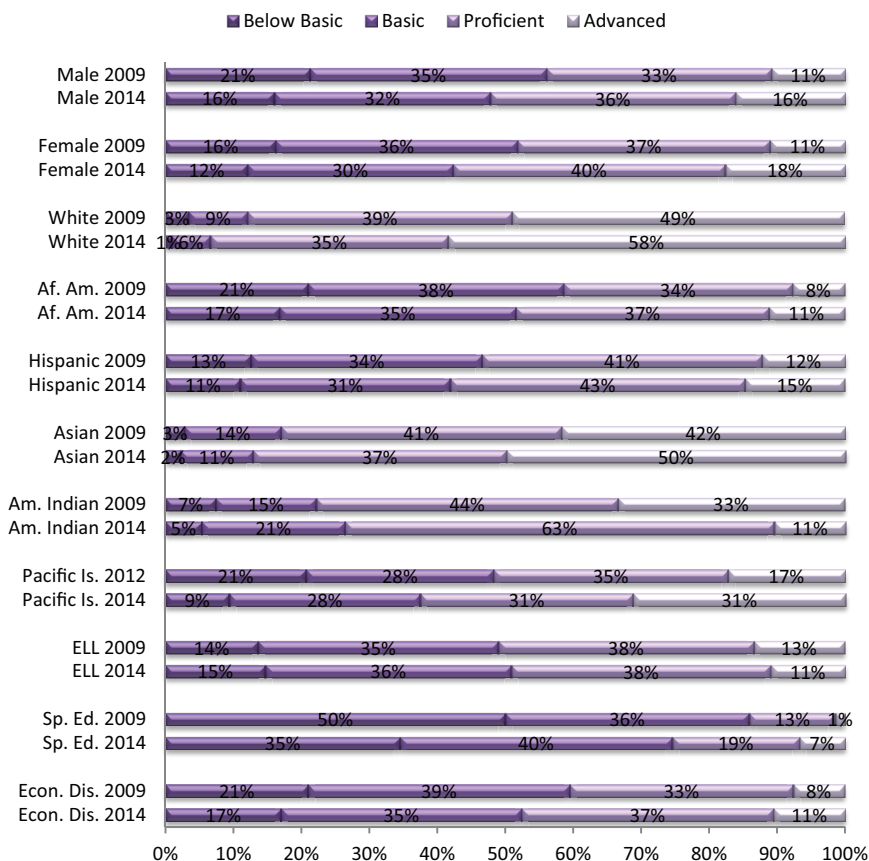


FIGURE 6-6 Percentage of student groups scoring at each performance level for DC CAS math 2009 and 2014.

SOURCE: Data from LearnDC at <http://www.learndc.org> [May 2015].

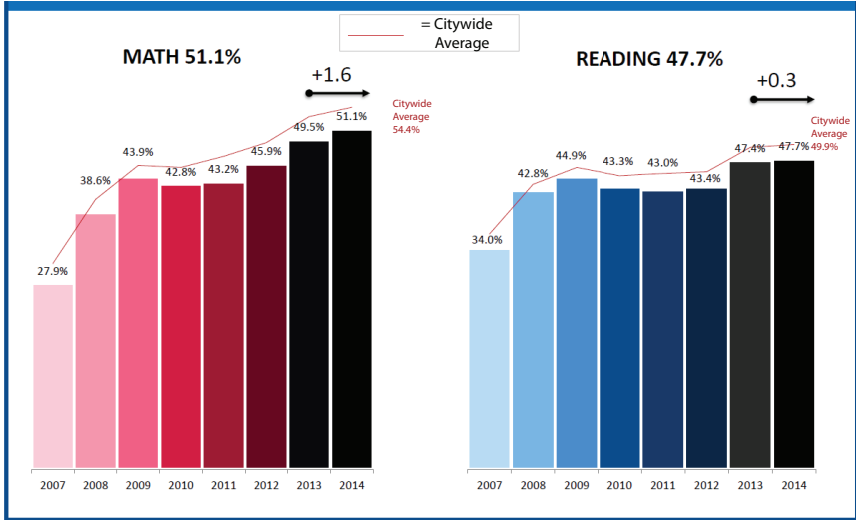


FIGURE 6-7 Percentage of DCPS students who scored proficient or above on DC CAS math and reading, compared to the percentage for all public schools’ students in the city: 2007-2014.

SOURCE: Office of the State Superintendent of Education (2014a).

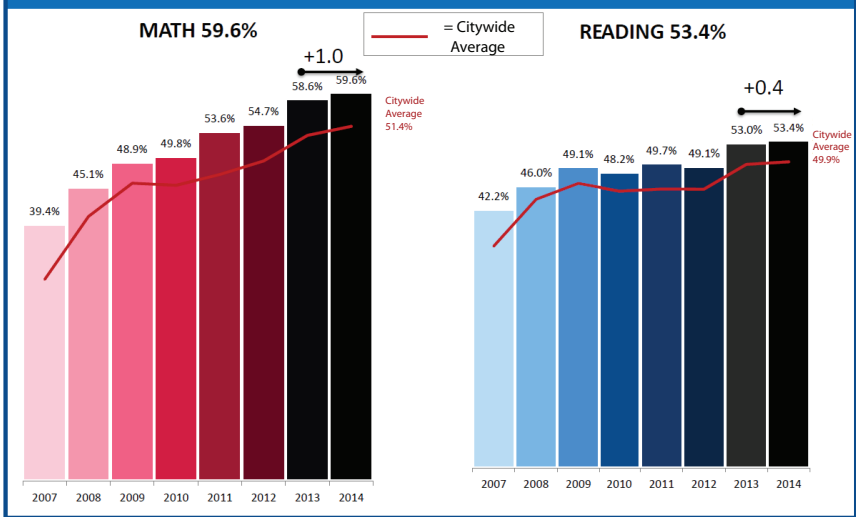


FIGURE 6-8 Percentage of charter school students who scored proficient or above on DC CAS math and reading, compared to the percentage for all public schools’ students in the city: 2007-2014.

SOURCE: Office of the State Superintendent of Education (2014a).

from 27.9 percent to 51.1 percent (see Figure 6-7); the proficiency rate for charter school students increased from 39.4 percent to 59.6 percent (see Figure 6-8).

Gains in reading were smaller for the 2007-2014 period. For DCPS students, the proficiency rate increased from 34.0 percent to 47.7 percent. However, as can be seen in Figure 6-7 (above), progress in the proficiency rate was fairly flat between 2008 and 2012, and then increased from 43.4 percent in 2013 to 47.7 percent in 2014. The proficiency rate for charter school students showed the same pattern, as shown in Figure 6-8 (above), but starting with a higher rate: the proficiency rate was 42.2 percent in 2007, 53 percent in 2013, and 53.4 percent in 2014.

Thus, despite some evidence of improvement over time, DCPS students consistently perform below the citywide average in both subjects; public charter school students consistently perform above the citywide average in both subjects.

To further explore these differences, we compared the outcomes for DCPS and charter schools students on the DC CAS reading test by various characteristics. We were only able to obtain these data for 2 years, 2013 and 2014. Table 6-1 shows the percentage of students in each group who

**TABLE 6-1 Percentage of Students Who Scored Proficient or Above in Reading on DC CAS, by Students' Characteristics and School Sector, 2013 and 2014**

Group	State		DCPS		Charter	
	2013	2014	2013	2014	2013	2014
All	49.5	49.9	47.4	47.7	53.0	53.4
Female	55.5	56.0	53.4	53.7	58.9	59.2
Male	43.6	43.9	41.8	41.6	46.8	47.3
Asian	74.1	78.4	73.1	78.2	77.3	79.0
African American	43.7	43.8	38.7	38.5	50.5	50.5
Hispanic	52.2	50.0	51.1	48.6	54.7	52.5
Mixed Race	80.2	83.1	82.8	83.7	75.0	81.9
White	91.8	92.1	92.0	91.6	91.1	93.9
Economically Disadvantaged	42.1	41.9	37.7	36.5	48.4	49.1
English-Language Learner	39.6	37.3	36.8	36.3	44.6	39.1
Special Education	19.3	19.7	18.2	17.6	21.3	22.7

NOTE: This table excludes two groups due to small numbers: Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and American Indian/Native Alaskan.

SOURCE: Office of the State Superintendent of Education (2014a, p. 16).

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scored proficient or above for all D.C. students and by sector. The comparable data for math is shown in Table 6-2.

The information in these graphs suggests differences in performance across the two sectors. For DCPS students, the average change in the proficiency rate from 2013 to 2014 for reading was negative for all groups except Asians, females, and mixed-race students. The decreases ranged from  $-0.2$  for blacks and males to  $-2.5$  for Hispanic students. Among charter school students, only two groups lost ground between 2013 and 2014: Hispanic students ( $-2.2$ ) and English-language learners ( $-5.5$ ). The proficiency rate increased for all other groups except blacks, for whom there was no change.

For math, most of the changes in proficiency rates were positive for both sectors. Among DCPS students, all groups showed increases in proficiency rates except Asians (no change) and special education students ( $-0.1$ ). Among charter school students, all groups showed increases except whites ( $-0.3$ ), Hispanics ( $-2.3$ ), and English-language learners ( $-5.1$ ).

Of particular note in these figures is the proficiency rate for black and economically disadvantaged students enrolled in DCPS. For both groups, roughly 60 percent scored below proficient in both subjects. Although there have been some small improvements over the years, these results are

**TABLE 6-2** Percentage of Students Who Scored Proficient or Above in Math on DC CAS by Students' Characteristics and School Sector, 2013 and 2014

Group	State		DCPS		Charter	
	2013	2014	2013	2014	2013	2014
All	53.0	54.4	49.5	50.9	58.6	59.6
Female	55.5	57.4	52.2	54.3	60.4	61.8
Male	50.6	51.5	47.0	47.6	56.6	57.3
Asian	86.0	86.6	85.8	85.8	87.5	89.5
African American	47.1	48.1	40.1	40.8	56.2	57.3
Hispanic	58.6	58.3	57.4	58.0	61.0	58.7
Mixed Race	82.7	85.9	84.5	87.0	79.1	83.8
White	91.0	92.0	91	92.2	91.3	91.0
Economically Disadvantaged	46.2	47.4	40.4	40.9	54.5	56.1
English-Language Learner	50.2	49.4	48.3	49.9	53.7	48.6
Special Education	24.0	24.3	20.5	20.4	29.4	29.9

NOTE: This table excludes two groups due to small numbers: Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and American Indian/Native Alaskan.

SOURCE: Office of the State Superintendent of Education (2014a, p. 16).

disturbing. Students in these groups who attend charter schools fare slightly better: about 50 percent score below proficient in reading and about 40 percent do so in math. It is important to note again that these findings cannot be interpreted causally; that is, one cannot infer from the data that these groups perform better when enrolled in charter schools because there have been demographic shifts in the enrollments for charter and DCPS schools that may also have influenced average performance.

In addition to examining trends over time, we also reviewed the results from a study conducted by EdCORE researchers that examines performance after adjusting for demographic shifts in the cohorts being compared (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2014c). Using regression-based procedures, this analysis compared score trends from 2006-2007 to 2012-2013 overall and for different groups of students.<sup>15</sup> These analyses generally show that there is an upward trend in math achievement, with students in later years outperforming students at the same grade level in earlier years. Specifically, students in later years outscore their peers who were at the same grade level in 2006-2007 in math (by about 0.18 to 0.43 of the standard deviation). In reading, however, achievement improved in 2007-2008 and then remained almost unchanged until 2012-2013, when there was an increase.

The EdCORE comparisons of performance by student groups showed the following:

- Test scores have improved for both economically advantaged and disadvantaged students. These gains are much larger for economically advantaged students.
- Test scores have improved for all major racial and ethnic groups in the city (blacks, Hispanics, whites), with larger improvements among blacks and Hispanics.
- Test scores have improved more among economically advantaged black students than other groups. Black females showed higher gains in reading than their male peers; males and females performed at comparable levels in math.

The EdCORE analyses by sector also showed that, although both DCPS and charter students showed improvement, the magnitude of the gains were higher for DCPS students in every year. To further explore this finding, the researchers compared score gains for students who switched sectors (changed from a DCPS to a charter school or vice versa) and those

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<sup>15</sup>The methods include observed student covariates and school fixed effects. The results are reported in standard deviation units (proportion of a standard deviation on the test). For details, see Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation (2014c).

who remained in the same sector (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation 2014c). Score gains were consistent across the two groups.

The EdCORE report cautions that this finding does not necessarily mean that the charter schools have lower-performing students. Some students start and stay in charter schools, some move from a DCPS to a charter school, some move from a charter to a DCPS school, and some start and stay in a DCPS school. Students who are not successful in one sector may be more likely to move to another. More information is needed to fully understand these results.

The EdCORE researchers note two caveats about drawing conclusions from these analyses. The first is that changes in student performance trends that predated PERAA, changes in the composition of the student population for which they were unable to control, or other changes may have influenced the trends.<sup>16</sup> For example, they note that D.C. saw an influx of higher-performing students during the trend years analyzed, and the extent to which these new students account for gains is not completely clear. The second is that the first year studied, 2006-2007, was the first year the DC CAS was given, so some improvement may be accounted for by students' and teachers' growing familiarity with its format and expectations. The city would benefit from having even more detailed analyses to better understand the trends. For example, if the performance of student groups was also analyzed by income level or by ward, the results might help the city see important patterns.

The EdCORE report's authors (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2014c) concluded from this analysis that the positive trends in student performance may not be completely attributable to changes in the composition of the student populations. Further study of these questions would be useful to the city.

### STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: NAEP DATA

NAEP is an assessment administered by the U.S. Department of Education and overseen by the National Assessment Governing Board. NAEP has provided data on what students know and can do in math, reading, and other subjects since the 1960s and is often used as an external gauge of students' achievement in the tested subjects that is independent of state achievement tests used for accountability purposes. NAEP differs from state achievement tests in that it is not given to every student every time it is administered, and NAEP scores are not reported for individual students.

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<sup>16</sup>The researchers conducted an analysis of the possible role of changes in the demographic composition of the student population (Education Consortium for Research and Evaluation, 2014c, p. 18), but note that there are possible factors for which they did not control.

Instead, the assessment is given to a representative sample of students across the country, and scores are reported for the nation, states, and some urban districts.

One useful aspect of NAEP is that it is not a high-stakes test—that is, there are no consequences for students, teachers, or schools based on the test results—and so it is not subject to the pressures that often surround state tests. NAEP uses its own content frameworks for the subject areas in which it tests, and all students are measured against common performance expectations. Thus, the results can be compared across jurisdictions and also across time because of the steps taken to keep the assessments consistent year to year.<sup>17</sup> The NAEP frameworks for reading and math are not aligned with any specific state’s content standards, and thus, results from NAEP and from DC CAS are not strictly comparable.

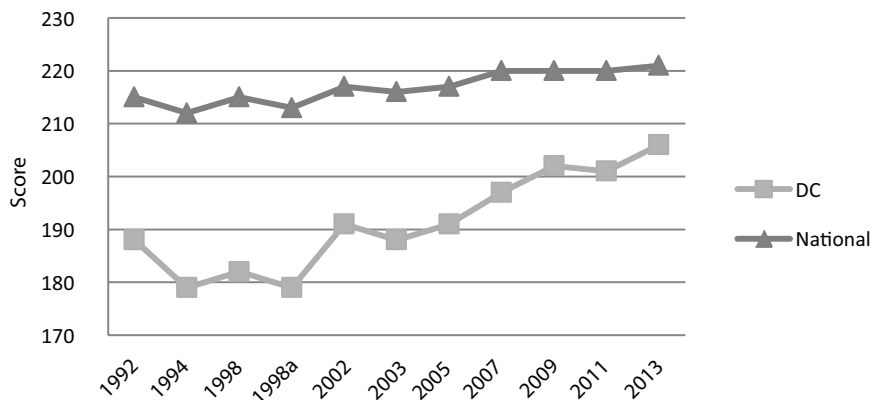
Since the early 1990s, D.C. has participated in NAEP as a state, and the NAEP scores reflect performance for all the city’s schools, including the charter schools. In 2002, NAEP implemented the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA), which uses a sampling design that allows reporting of reading and math results and comparison for large urban districts in the country. DCPS has participated in TUDA since 2003, when it was one of only a handful of participating urban districts (6 in reading and 10 in math), but this number increased to 21 urban school districts for 2013. However, there have been changes over time to the sampling design for the D.C.: in 2009, the city’s charter schools were eliminated from the TUDA sample, although they continue to be included in state NAEP results.<sup>18</sup> The results presented below are from D.C.’s participation in state NAEP unless otherwise noted (see discussion in National Research Council, 2011, p. 67).

NAEP reports average scores on separate 0 to 500 scales in math and reading, as well as the percentages of students at each of its three achievement levels, basic, proficient, and advanced; the percentage scoring below basic is also reported. Figures 6-9 and 6-10 show the students’ mean scale scores in reading, for 4th-grade and 8th-grade students, respectively, from the first administration of NAEP through 2013. Figures 6-11 and 6-12 show similar data for math. Average scores for D.C. students are consistently lower than for students in other urban school districts for the nation. However, this gap is narrowing for 4th- and 8th-grade students in math and for 4th-grade students in reading; reading scores for D.C.’s 8th-grade students have remained constant.

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<sup>17</sup>Additional information about NAEP can be found at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard> [February 2015].

<sup>18</sup>As of 2009, only schools that are included in D.C.’s adequate yearly progress calculation for NCLB are included in the TUDA results; charter schools are not included in AYP calculations. Prior to 2009, charter schools were included in the TUDA sample.

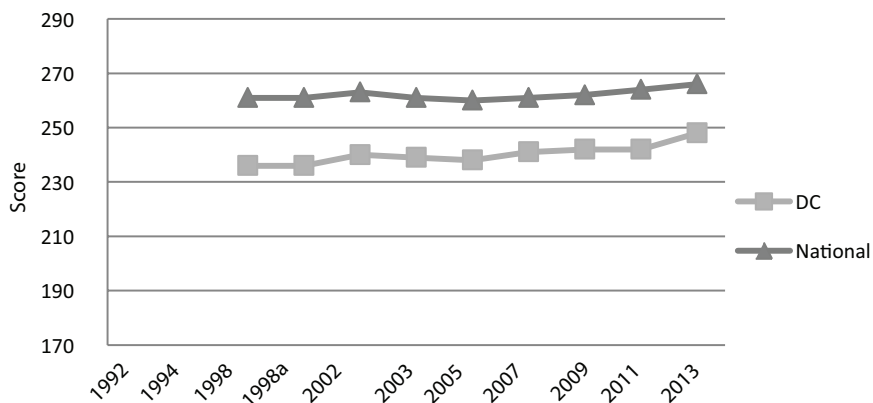


1992 - 1998 tests were given without accommodations.

1998(a) - 2013 tests were given with accommodations.

**FIGURE 6-9** Mean scale scores on NAEP in reading for 4th-grade students for D.C. and nationally: 1992-2013.

SOURCE: Data from U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (2013a).



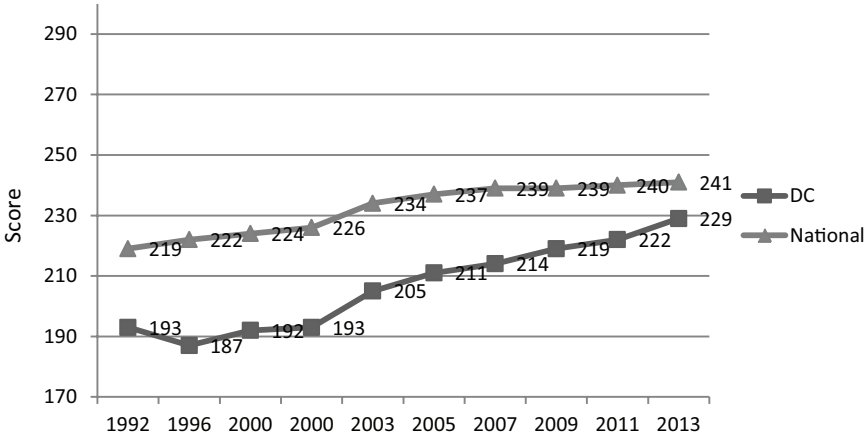
No data present for 1992 and 1994.

1998 test was given without accommodations.

1998(a) - 2013 tests were given with accommodations.

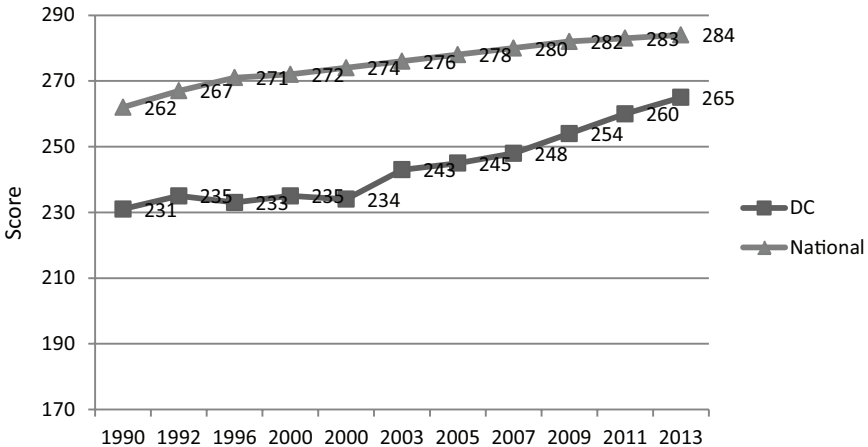
**FIGURE 6-10** Mean scale scores on NAEP in reading for 8th-grade students for D.C. and nationally: 1992-2013.

SOURCE: Data from U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (2013b).



**FIGURE 6-11** Mean scale scores on NAEP in math for 4th-grade students for D.C. and nationally: 1992-2013.

SOURCE: Data from U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (2013a).



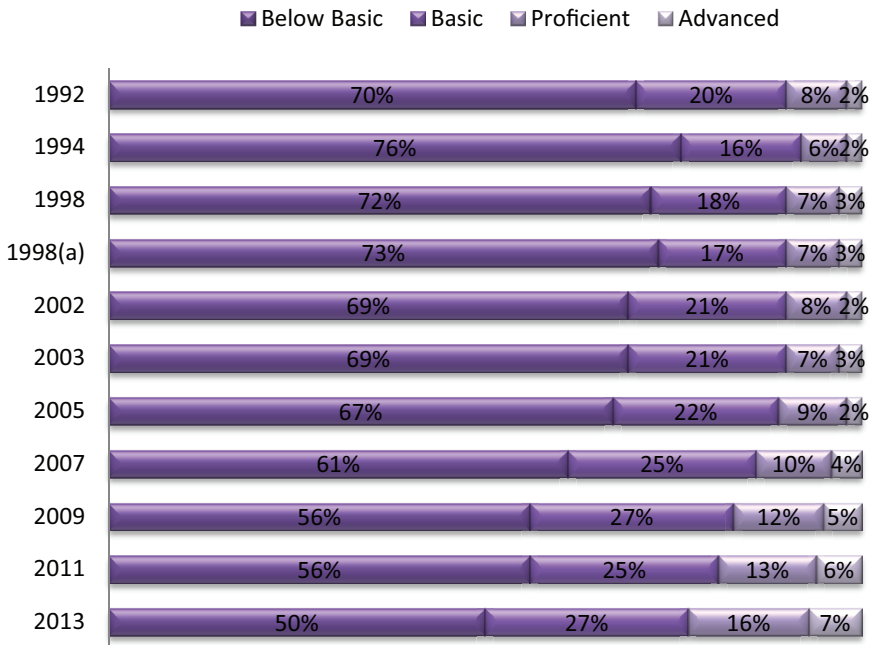
**FIGURE 6-12** Mean scale scores on NAEP in math, for 8th-grade students for D.C. and nationally: 1992-2013.

SOURCE: Data from U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (2013b).

Figures 6-13 and 6-14 show, respectively, the percentage of D.C.'s 4th- and 8th-grade students at each achievement level in reading from the earliest year available through 2013, and Figures 6-15 and 6-16 show similar data for math. Our focus in the rest of this section is on changes from 2007 to the present.

### Reading Performance

In 4th-grade reading, the distribution shows a trend of steadily improving performance: see Figure 6-13. On a year-to-year basis, there was a gradual shift of students from the below basic level to the basic, proficient, and advanced performance levels. In 2007, only 39 percent of students had



1992 - 1998 tests were given without accommodations.

1998(a) - 2013 tests were given with accommodations.

**FIGURE 6-13** Percentage of D.C.'s 4th-grade students at each NAEP achievement level in reading.

SOURCE: Data from U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (2013a).



No data present for 1992 and 1994.  
 1998 test was given without accommodations.  
 1998(a) - 2013 tests were given with accommodations.

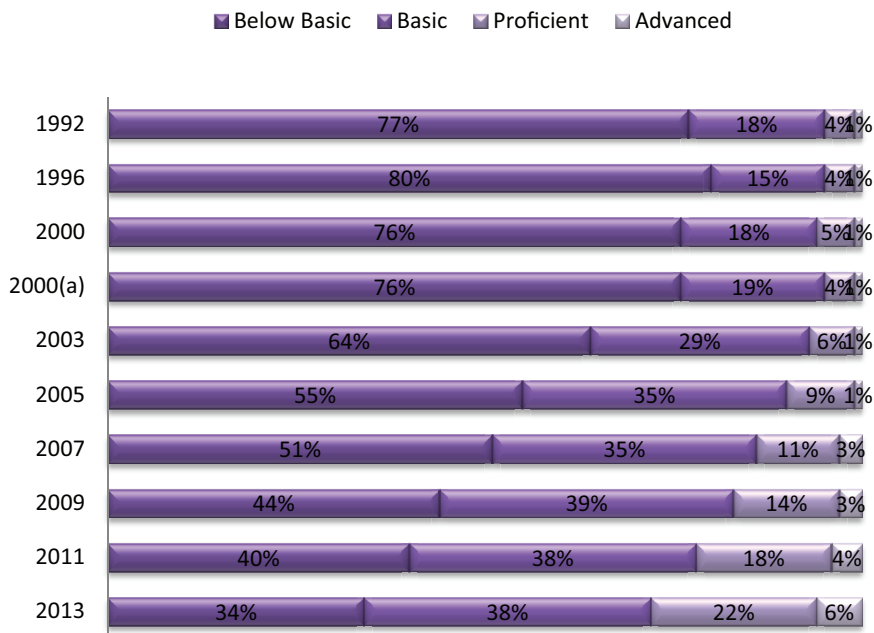
**FIGURE 6-14** Percentage of D.C.'s 8th-grade students at each NAEP achievement level in reading.

SOURCE: Data from U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (2013b).

scored basic or above; by 2013, it had increased to 50 percent. We highlight the following results:<sup>19</sup>

- The average scale score for D.C. students in 2013 was 206. Although it was lower than the average for the nation (221) and for large cities that participate in TUDA (212), it was an increase from 2007 (197) (see Figure 6-9, above).

<sup>19</sup>See state snapshot at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2013/pdf/2014464DC4.pdf> [January 2015].



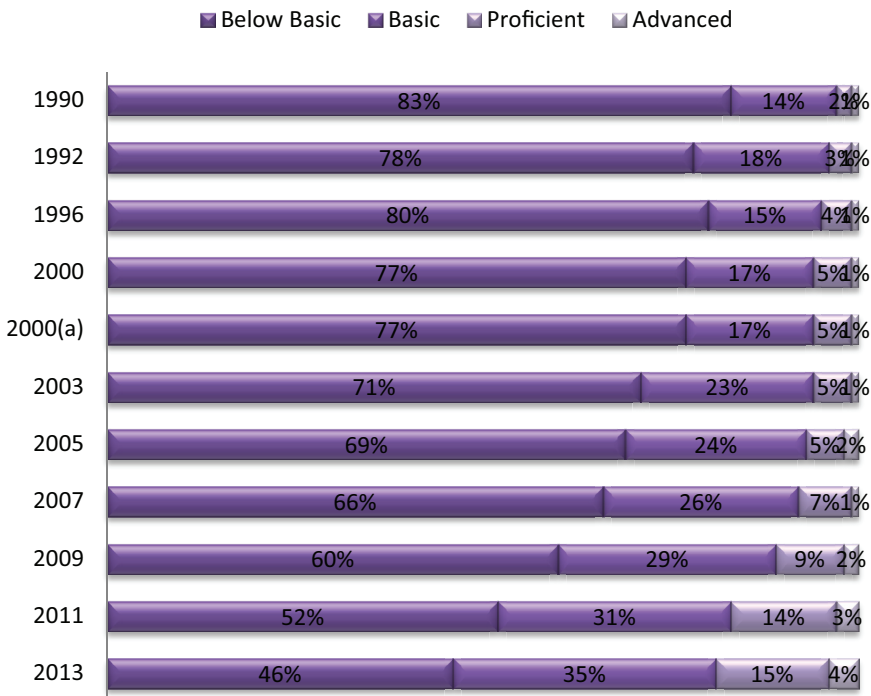
1992 - 2000 tests were given without accommodations.

2000(a) - 2013 tests were given with accommodations.

**FIGURE 6-15** Percentage of D.C.'s 4th-grade students at each NAEP achievement level in math.

SOURCE: Data from U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (2013a).

- The percentage of students scoring at or above proficient increased from 14 percent in 2007 to 23 percent in 2013 (see Figure 6-13, above).
- When scores are compared for students grouped by race and ethnicity and eligibility for free or reduced-price lunches, large gaps are evident; this disparity has existed for at least as long as data have been available, since the early 1990s.
  - In 2013, the average for African American students was 62 points lower than for white students, and the average for Hispanic students was 51 points lower than for white students. Both gaps are not significantly different from those in 1992.
  - The average for students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches was 50 points lower than for those not eligible. This gap is wider than it was in 1998.



1992 - 2000 tests were given without accommodations.  
 2000(a) - 2013 tests were given with accommodations.

**FIGURE 6-16** Percentage of D.C.'s 8th-grade students at each NAEP achievement level in math.

SOURCE: Data from U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (2013b).

- It is also noteworthy that mean scale scores for white students in D.C. have been higher than those for white students nationwide: in 2009 they were 256 for D.C. students and 229 nationally; in 2011 they were 255 for D.C. students and 230 nationally; and in 2013, they were 259 for D.C. students and 231 nationally.<sup>20</sup>

In 8th-grade reading, year-to-year scores also improved, although the increases were small: see Figure 6-14. In 2007, 48 percent scored basic

<sup>20</sup>See <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/statecomparisons/> [February 2015].

or above; in 2013 the figure was 57 percent. We highlight the following results:<sup>21</sup>

- The average scale score for D.C. students in 2013 was 248. Although it was lower than the average for the nation (266) and for large cities that participate in TUDA (258), it was an increase from 2007 (241) (see Figure 6-10, above).
- The percentage of students scoring at or above proficient increased by only 1 percentage point between 2007 and 2013, from 17 to 18 percent (see Figure 6-14, above).
- When scores are compared for students grouped by race and ethnicity and eligibility for free or reduced-price lunches, large gaps are evident: this has been consistent over time.
  - In 2013, the average for African American students was 54 points lower than that for white students, and the average for Hispanic students was 49 points lower than that for white students.<sup>22</sup>
  - The average for students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches was 31 points lower than for those not eligible. This gap is not significantly different from the gap in 1998.
- As was the case for 4th-grade students in reading, the mean scale scores for white 8th-grade students in D.C. has been higher than those for white students nationwide: in 2011 they were 292 for D.C. students and 272 nationally, and in 2013 they were 297 for D.C. students and 275 nationally.

### Math Performance

The distribution for 4th-grade students in math shows a clear pattern of year-to-year improvement. When the test was first given in 1992, less than one-quarter of students (23 percent) scored at the basic level or above; in 2007, the percentage had increased to just under half (49 percent), and in 2013, it was two-thirds (66 percent).

We highlight the following results:<sup>23</sup>

- The average scale score for D.C. students in 2013 was 229. Although it was lower than the average for the nation (241) and the average

<sup>21</sup>See <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2013/pdf/2014464DC8.pdf> [January 2015].

<sup>22</sup>The gap could not be calculated in 1998 because there were too few white students.

<sup>23</sup>See <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2013/pdf/2014465DC4.pdf> [January 2015].

for large cities that participate in TUDA (235), it was an increase from 2007 (214) (see Figure 6-11).

- The percentage of students scoring at or above proficient increased from 14 percent in 2007 to 28 percent in 2013 (see Figure 6-15).
- When scores are compared for students grouped by race and ethnicity and eligibility for free or reduced-price lunches, large gaps are evident.
  - In 2013, the average for African American students was 55 points lower than that for white students, and the average for Hispanic students was 49 points lower than that for whites. Both of these performance gaps are similar to those observed in 1992.
  - The average for students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches was 41 points lower than for those not eligible; this gap was wider than it was in 1996.
- As was the case for reading, mean scale scores in math for white 4th-grade students in D.C. were higher than those for white 4th-grade students nationwide: in 2009 they were 270 for D.C. students and 248 nationally, in 2011 they were 272 for D.C. students and 249 nationally, and in 2013 they were 276 for D.C. students and 250 nationally.

The distribution for 8th-grade students also shows steady year-to-year improvement (see Figure 6-16). When the test was first given in 1992, only 17 percent of students scored at the basic level or above. This percentage increased to 34 percent in 2007 and to 54 percent by 2013.

We highlight the following results:<sup>24</sup>

- The average scale score for D.C. students in 2013 was 265. Although it was lower than the national average (284) and the average for other large cities that participate in TUDA (276), it was an increase from 2007 (248) (see Figure 6-12).
- The percentage of students scoring at or above proficient increased from 8 percent in 2007 to 19 percent in 2013 (see Figure 6-16).
- When scores are compared for students grouped by race and ethnicity and eligibility for free or reduced-price lunches, large gaps are evident.
  - In 2013, the average for African American students was 56 points lower than that for white students, and the average for Hispanic students was 52 points lower than that for whites.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup>See <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2013/pdf/2014465DC8.pdf> [January 2015].

<sup>25</sup>The gap could not be calculated because there were too few white students.

- The average for students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches was 35 points lower than for those not eligible; this gap was wider than it was in 1996.
- As was the case for 4th-grade students in math, mean scores for white 8th-grade students in D.C. were higher than those for white 8th-grade students nationwide: in 2011 they were 319 for D.C. students and 293 nationally; in 2013 they were 317 for D.C. students and 293 nationally.

### COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMS

We were able to obtain only quite limited data about performance on college entrance exams (SAT, ACT), and we could not be certain about the characteristics of students included in those data summaries. For example, we could not determine whether the summaries included private schools students residing in D.C. as well as those enrolled in public schools; whether all students were encouraged to take the exams, not just those who intended to go to college; or how repeat test takers and their scores were handled. In addition, there are discrepancies between the data provided by the city and those available from the two test sponsors (the College Board and ACT), and we were not able to resolve them. We judged that the information was not sufficient to support any firm conclusions about changes in D.C. students' performance over time or any comparisons between students who attend DCPS schools and charter schools, and thus they are not included in this report.

For a sound evaluation, we would have needed such data as the following:

- participation rates based on the number of students who take the SAT or ACT in relation to those eligible to take it (e.g., the proportion of juniors who take one or both of the exams);
- the demographic characteristics of the test takers;
- participation rates by demographic groups (gender, race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status);
- comparison of participation rates across sectors, DCPS and charter schools, to evaluate the extent to which all students are taking advantage of the opportunity to pursue higher education; and
- detailed information about the distribution of test scores in addition to the average (the mean), such as standard deviations and quartiles.

## GRADUATION RATES

In 2011, D.C. adopted a new method for calculating the graduation rate, called the adjusted cohort graduation rate, which is required by the U.S. Department of Education as part of NCLB. It is a more precise way to calculate the rate (see discussion in National Research Council, 2011), but the change made the rates prior to 2011 incomparable to those for 2011 and later. Thus, we are not able to track the rate from the time of the implementation of PERAA.

Table 6-3 shows the adjusted cohort rate for all students in D.C. (DCPS and charter school students) and by group for 2011 through 2014. The graduation rates are low—61 percent for all students in 2014. Some student groups have even lower rates: 54 percent for males, 53 percent for students eligible for free and reduced-price lunches, and just 40 percent for special education students.

The D.C. rates are of concern at a time when graduation rates have been rising in many places. Nationally, for 2012-2013, the overall rate increased from 78 to 81 percent; for blacks it increased from 66 to 68 percent, and for Hispanic students it increased from 71 to 76 percent. Large cities have also seen overall increases: for example, in Chicago the rate increased from 63 to 73 percent between 2010 and 2014; in Baltimore the rate increased from 66 to 74 percent between 2010 and 2012; and in New York City the rate increase from 69 to 70 percent between 2010 and 2012.<sup>26</sup> Table 6-3 also shows that the overall graduation rate in D.C. fluctuated from year to year: there was a decrease of 2 percentage points from 2011 to 2012; an increase of 5 percentage points from 2012 to 2013; and an increase of 1 percentage point from 2013 to 2014. Although there was a net gain of 2 percentage points between 2011 and 2014, one cannot really interpret this as a trend given the year-to-year fluctuations and how small the changes are.

Similar fluctuations are evident in the rates for most of the student groups. Between 2011 and 2014, there was a net gain for all groups except students classified as multiracial and those classified as economically disadvantaged. For multiracial students, the rate dropped each year, for a net loss of 14 percentage points (from 93 percent in 2011 to 79 percent in 2014). One possible reason for this noticeable change is that if the number of students in this group is small, it makes the total prone to significant fluctuations. The rate for students who are eligible for free and reduced-price

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<sup>26</sup>See <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/tables/AFGR0812.asp> [May 2015]; <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/educational-attainment-chicago-public-schools-students-focus-four-year-college-degrees> [May 2015]; <http://baltimore-berc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Collegereportjuly2013.pdf> [May 2015]; and [http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/scmsAdmin/media/users/sg158/PDFs/NYCGTC/Coca\\_NewYorkCityGostoCollege\\_AFirstLook\\_Brief\\_Nov14.pdf](http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/scmsAdmin/media/users/sg158/PDFs/NYCGTC/Coca_NewYorkCityGostoCollege_AFirstLook_Brief_Nov14.pdf) [May 2015].

**TABLE 6-3** Percentage of Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates for All D.C. Students and by Group, 2011-2014

Group	2011	2012	2013	2014
All Students	59	57	62	61
Race or Ethnicity				
American Indian/Alaskan Native	—	—	—	—
Asian	65	79	88	85
African American	58	56	60	60
Hispanic/Latino	52	52	63	62
Native Hawaii and Pacific Islander	—	55	—	—
Multiracial	93	91	89	79
White	89	85	85	79
Gender				
Female	65	65	69	68
Male	53	48	54	54
Student Status				
Special education	39	37	41	40
English-language learner	53	50	52	64
Eligible for free or reduced-price lunch	61	55	59	53

SOURCE: Data from LearnDC, available at <http://www.learnDC.org/schoolprofiles> [March 2015].

lunches has fluctuated somewhat, but there was a net loss of 8 percentage points from 2011 to 2014: in 2014 only slightly more than half of these students graduated (53 percent). This change may be related to changes in the criteria for classifying students as economically disadvantaged (see Chapter 2), but it clearly stands out.

The graduation rate for black students has fluctuated only slightly across the 4 years (showing a net gain of 2 percentage points); for both 2013 and 2014 was the lowest rate of any of the racial/ethnic groups. In contrast, the rate for Hispanics and Latinos showed a net gain of 10 percentage points from 2011 to 2014 (52 to 62 percent). Females graduate at a much higher rate than males, and this pattern is consistent across all the groups for all 4 years.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The outcomes we examined present a mixed picture of students' achievement in D.C. The results from both DC CAS and NAEP since PERAA show noticeable improvement in math scores; there has been less progress in reading (as has been true in many states). Graduation rates in

the years since 2011 have fluctuated from year to year, with no discernable pattern; they remain low. Achievement remains low for students of low socioeconomic status, black and Hispanic students, and for English-language learners and students with disabilities.

The gap between the performance of white students and that of black and Hispanic students has not narrowed, as shown in both the DC CAS and NAEP data: for DC CAS, we could only measure the gap by comparing percentages of students who scored proficient or above; for NAEP, we could only compare scale score performance.

We could not determine performance gaps on DC CAS for students of low socioeconomic status, English-language learners, and students with disabilities because the city does not report data for the relevant comparison groups (e.g., students who are not in poverty, native English speakers, and students without disabilities). It is important to consider in relation to the teacher effectiveness ratings we discussed in Chapter 4 the fact that most teachers are rated as effective or higher while achievement remains low, which deserves investigation.

**CONCLUSION 6-1** The percentage of all students scoring proficient or above in reading and math on the DC CAS increased between 2007 and 2014. The increase is larger for math than it is for reading. The positive trends are also apparent on NAEP.

**CONCLUSION 6-2** There is a stark difference in the overall performance and score distributions among different groups of students. Black and Hispanic students, those with disabilities, those eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, and English-language learners are much more likely to be in the lowest performance categories than other students. Some improvement is evident since 2009, but more than half of these students still score below the proficient level. There is little indication that these performance differences are narrowing significantly.

**CONCLUSION 6-3** Publicly available reports of DC CAS results often highlight only the overall proficiency rate—the percentage of students who score proficient or above. The proficiency rate provides only a quick overview of results. It does not reveal information about other changes in student performance, such as the percentage of students who score in each performance level or the percentage of students who score just below the proficient level. Proficiency rates can mask important changes in the performance of the lowest-scoring students and disparities in achievement among student groups, which are both important

for decision making. Additional measures—such as the percentage of students who score at each performance level and scale scores—are also needed for decision making.

We had planned to provide a very detailed picture of student outcomes that would help the city assess both how students have fared in the years since PERAA and the specific areas in which improvement is still needed. We would have liked to have more information with which to examine differences between DCPS and charter school students, such as more than 2 years of data disaggregated by student characteristics. We would also have liked to have data on other kinds of outcomes, particularly post-secondary outcomes such as workforce and college enrollment data. Such data were not available.

**CONCLUSION 6-4** Graduation rates have fluctuated in the years since PERAA, with no clear discernible trend; this has occurred at a time when national rates have been increasing. The D.C. rates remain disturbingly low for black and Hispanic students, those with disabilities, those eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, and English-language learners.

**CONCLUSION 6-5** The committee's evaluation was limited to a few blunt measures—proficiency rates on standardized tests and high school graduation rates—because of lack of data. To better understand outcomes for D.C. students, the city needs to collect and make data available on the following topics:

- the percentage of students who score at each performance level and information on the scale scores, including the percentage of students who score at each scale score, means, standard deviations, percentiles, and quartiles;
- attendance and truancy;
- course-taking and completion;
- college entrance exam performance;
- college enrollment and progression, such as that available through the National Student Clearinghouse; and
- career outcomes, such as employment and earnings/salary.

These data should be provided in a format that makes them useful and accessible to researchers, educators, parents, and the public. The format should allow them to be analyzed by year, school, grade, racial and ethnic group, poverty status, and English-language learner and special education status, as well as by sector (charter and DCPS schools).

## 7

# Synthesis, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The Public Education Reform Amendment Act (PERAA) called for this study because its drafters recognized that D.C. residents would want to know how well the public schools are doing after a significant change in education governance. Giving the mayor control of the public schools is a dramatic change in any city, but by itself it will not determine the path of change. Its effects will be different in each place, reflecting each city's particular history and circumstances, the decisions the mayor and his or her chosen leaders make, and the style of leadership they provide. The D.C. Council recognized that the governance changes would not in themselves improve learning conditions and outcomes and therefore asked us to assess

- whether the law's expectations have been met and whether the changes have led to improved coordination, efficiency, and accountability;
- the extent to which the actions school leaders took were consistent with research and best practices; and
- changes in the conditions for learning in the schools and outcomes for students 7 years after the governance change.

In this chapter we present our answers to these questions, including our conclusions about the results to date of PERAA, and we offer recommendations to the city for improvements in public school education.

### WERE PERAA'S EXPECTATIONS MET, AND DID ITS CHANGES BRING ABOUT IMPROVED COORDINATION, EFFICIENCY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY?

We studied the provisions of PERAA and other documents to understand the goals for the law and then reviewed the institutional arrangements as they have evolved in response to circumstances. Most of PERAA's provisions concern five agencies that, together, govern the public schools. D.C.'s leaders have attended to most of the law's requirements, but PERAA's designers did not explicitly address every aspect of the structure for education governance. The result is a structure that has some ad hoc elements and leaves room for improvement in public accountability.

#### Overall Governance

Two agencies, the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and the Public Charter School Board (PCSB), already existed and PERAA gave them authority to continue pursuing their missions and the flexibility to make changes. Both agencies appear from our review to have implemented changes that show promise, such as a new teacher evaluation system (DCPS) and a new performance assessment system for the charter schools (PCSB), and to be operating more effectively than they were before PERAA.

The other three agencies, the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME), the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), and the State Board of Education (SBOE), are new. (The SBOE replaced the former Board of Education.) Together, these three bodies are responsible for overseeing the quality of public education in D.C. At present, none of these agencies is clearly recognized as the lead agency for overseeing the quality of education provided to all students enrolled in public schools. The DME and SBOE are small and their reach is limited. OSSE, which was created to perform the state functions associated with federal compliance and contracting, is large, and its mission is diffuse. It was clearly designed to perform the functions of a state agency, such as meeting federal requirements, but it has also taken on some additional responsibilities. OSSE has not yet earned the full confidence of officials in other agencies and we suggest that an in-depth assessment of its role and operations is warranted.

We found three other significant areas where the results so far do not match PERAA's expectations:

- **Interagency Coordination:** PERAA called for the creation of a body to coordinate across the agencies concerned with the well-being of children and adolescents because many D.C. students are living in poverty or have other needs that require attention or services

beyond what the schools can provide. City officials initially set up this entity, but it was subsequently defunded. There are other efforts to coordinate among city agencies, but they do not meet the objectives of PERAA. As a result, there currently is no entity that can provide the information sharing, collaboration, and support that are critical for many D.C. students.

- **Data Infrastructure:** PERAA called for the development of a data infrastructure to support interagency coordination. Despite significant progress in collecting data of many types, that infrastructure does not exist. The lack of such an infrastructure means that the city does not have accurate and complete information that is essential for inter- and intra-agency coordination, monitoring, and accountability or for ongoing internal and external evaluation and continuous improvement.
- **Coordination among Education Agencies:** PERAA was intended to facilitate coordination and efficiency among the new and old agencies that govern public education. The law was not explicit about the lines of authority among the three education agencies that have responsibility across all public schools and students (OSSE, SBOE, DME). These agencies do coordinate some of their work with one another but the mechanisms compelling them to do so are limited. Consequently, coordination among them depends heavily on the collegiality of city leaders and other officials, and there are inefficiencies and gaps in oversight.

### Transparency and Accountability

PERAA also addressed the issue of accountability to the public, in part by calling for an ombudsman. The ombudsman was intended to fill a role formerly played by the old Board of Education, a venue for D.C. residents and parents to voice their concerns. The Office of the Ombudsman was established and housed under in DME in 2007, defunded in 2010, and reestablished in 2014 under SBOE. The work of the new Office of the Ombudsman, with its very small staff, is supplemented by public engagement efforts in other agencies, but the office faces a significant challenge in addressing the needs in D.C. for both a venue to express concerns and an agency that can assist in problem resolution.

The committee saw little indication of progress toward transparency and public accountability in one significant area, the process for education budgeting. The city's response to PERAA brought about numerous changes to the process, but the resulting arrangements have not eliminated concerns about parity in the allocation of resources and about the visibility of budgetary decision making.

### Growth of the Charter Sector

Some factors that were not addressed in the original version of PERAA have come to be important. In particular, because the public charter sector has grown considerably since the law was adopted, the governance structure it described was based on a different balance between traditional and charter schools. Public charter schools generally are not subject to guidance about how they educate their students and manage their schools, and indeed PERAA reiterates that D.C.'s public charter schools have this independence. Under this logic, each charter school (or its governing entity) is accountable for outcomes rather than for its approaches to instruction: each school or entity is considered a separate local education agency (LEA). However, the law does not address the responsibility of D.C. to monitor basic conditions for learning or other aspects of the education provided in these schools. This omission, combined with concerns about coordination among the other agencies, leaves D.C. with important questions to consider about the oversight of the education of all of its students.

### Conclusions

**CONCLUSION 3-1** The city has executed most of what was called for in PERAA, and it has adapted some of its requirements in response to circumstances through legislative amendments and other administrative actions. The education agencies are mostly in place and carrying out their functions, but we note three problems:

1. The interagency coordination body called for by PERAA is not in place. The goals specified for that body are partly being addressed by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, but the range of these efforts is limited.
2. The Office of the State Superintendent of Education is not functioning effectively. The extent of OSSE's responsibility and authority are not clear and the agency has not yet established a strong reputation as an effective state education authority. We were not able to conduct a systematic evaluation of OSSE's current structure, operations, and priorities, but one is needed.
3. The District of Columbia made notable progress in collecting education data, making it publicly available during the time of this evaluation. However, the city does not have a fully operational, comprehensive infrastructure for data that meet PERAA's goals, its own needs in its capacity as a state government, or the needs of residents, researchers, and other users. To meet these needs, D.C. should have a single online data warehouse that would allow users

to examine trends over time, and aggregate and disaggregate data about students and student groups, and to coordinate data collection and analysis across agencies concerned with education, justice, and human services.

**CONCLUSION 3-2** PERAA's objective of improving coordination among the Deputy Mayor for Education, the State Board of Education, and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education has not been completely met, despite efforts by these agencies. PERAA does not clearly spell out the ways in which the agencies ought to coordinate, and this lack of specificity has led to confusion and duplication of effort. Coordination among DCPS and the charter schools is also limited.

**CONCLUSION 3-3** Accountability to the public requires that information about administrative operations be transparent and easily accessible and that mechanisms be available for D.C. residents to express their preferences and concerns. Reestablishing the Office of the Ombudsman after a long hiatus was a positive step, but the budgeting process for education expenditures is neither simpler nor more transparent than it was before PERAA.

**CONCLUSION 3-4** PERAA's objective of establishing clear lines of authority has not been completely met. Because the Office of the State Superintendent of Education is situated at the same level as DCPS and the Public Charter School Board, the respective responsibilities of these agencies are not clearly distinguished. On paper, the Deputy Mayor for Education is responsible for oversight of all three, but we did not see evidence of how this oversight is carried out. No one agency has ultimate responsibility for the quality of education for all the city's public school students.

**CONCLUSION 3-5** The current governance structure for D.C.'s public schools represents a reasonable response to the requirements of PERAA. The goals that have not yet been met—regarding coordination and oversight—point to two questions for the city to consider (1) whether the current oversight structure provides sufficient monitoring of the educational opportunities provided to students attending DCPS and charter schools throughout the city and (2) how best to oversee the education of all students attending any publicly funded school.

## WERE THE ACTIONS SCHOOL LEADERS TOOK CONSISTENT WITH RESEARCH AND BEST PRACTICES?

### Teacher Evaluation

We examined one major policy decision made by the leaders of DCPS under PERAA: to use a teacher evaluation system, IMPACT, as a means to improve the quality of the teacher workforce and, hence, student learning. It was not possible to examine similar strategies for the charter sector because no programmatic strategies apply across all of them. Nor could we examine teacher quality for the charter sector because no agency has the responsibility of collecting systematic information about the educators in charter schools.

We examined the system's design and implementation plan and reviewed data on changes in the teacher workforce. We compared the various features of IMPACT with findings from research on best practices and with procedures used in other states. Those features include multiple measures of teacher performance, feedback and supports provided to teachers, and opportunities for professional development. Based on the information available to us, we found that IMPACT generally reflects the guidance available from research for teacher evaluation systems of its type. However, some aspects of IMPACT's effectiveness rating procedures require attention: these include a lack of adequate quality control for the observational measures and a lack of documentation of the rationales for significant changes that have been made in the evaluation system. We also note that other information, besides ratings on IMPACT, is important for monitoring teacher quality.

Like assessment systems, teacher evaluation systems should be validated to determine the extent to which they provide accurate evidence to answer questions about teacher effectiveness. DCPS articulated a number of goals for IMPACT but has not yet developed a plan for evaluating progress toward meeting them.

DCPS placed a high priority on improving the quality of the teacher workforce but the highest-scoring teachers are not distributed equitably across DCPS schools. Inequities in conditions for learning and performance differences among student groups have not lessened since IMPACT was implemented. The committee recognizes that systematic evaluation of a teacher evaluation system is difficult and somewhat uncommon, but given the novel nature and potential unintended consequences of IMPACT, a structured plan for gathering validity evidence is needed so that DCPS can evaluate how well IMPACT is reaching its intended goals and where changes are needed. Meeting the city's goal of ensuring that there are high-quality teachers in every school will require further efforts.

## Conclusions

**CONCLUSION 4-1** DCPS officials defined a three-pronged approach to improving teacher quality: clarify performance expectations, provide quality feedback and support to teachers, and retain the most effective teachers. The design of the IMPACT teacher evaluation system and the associated implementation plan are generally consistent with current research on teacher evaluation systems. Four aspects of IMPACT's rating procedures need attention:

1. Quality control procedures are needed for the judgment-based ratings of teachers' commitment to school community and core professionalism, to ensure that scoring criteria are consistently applied.
2. More stringent quality control procedures are needed for developing, administering, and scoring the teacher-assessed student achievement component.
3. The city's approach for calculating individual value-added scores is reasonable, given the current state of research. The city's decision to use a single year of data in calculating the value added by a teacher should be reconsidered regularly in light of new research, and in light of the inherent tradeoffs of using single or multiple years.
4. Changes have been made to the ways the components of IMPACT are weighted, and a new effectiveness category was added, but the reasons for these changes are not documented. The justification for these changes needs to be made available.

**CONCLUSION 4-2** Changes that have been made to the relative weighting of the components of an IMPACT score mean that overall effectiveness scores are not comparable across years. The addition of a fifth effectiveness category in 2012 further complicates comparisons. Reports of trends in measured teacher effectiveness should clearly acknowledge these changes so that readers do not misinterpret the numbers.

**CONCLUSION 4-3** DCPS has procedures in place to use information from IMPACT to provide feedback and support to teachers and to encourage those who perform well to stay. The available data suggest that some of the desired changes in the workforce are evident: more than 80 percent of teachers classified as effective or higher remained in the system, while less than half of teachers classified as minimally effective remained with the system. However, these trend data do not

provide conclusive evidence on whether IMPACT has been successful in meeting all of its goals, nor do they isolate its effects on students or educators from those of other policy changes that have occurred since PERAA.

**CONCLUSION 4-4** Teachers with high IMPACT scores are not evenly distributed across DCPS schools. The data show an association between high concentrations of poverty and low IMPACT scores: average IMPACT scores for teachers in low- and medium-SES schools are consistently 24 to 30 points lower than for those teachers in the highest-SES schools. The reasons for this uneven distribution are not clear.

**CONCLUSION 4-5** The city needs a plan for gathering evidence to evaluate the extent to which the intended inferences from IMPACT are supported, particularly the improvement of teaching in schools serving lower-achieving students.\*

**CONCLUSION 4-6** Trends in teacher performance as measured by IMPACT are a tool for tracking teacher quality, but they have important drawbacks. The relative weighting of the components has changed over time. Moreover, these measures provide information only about DCPS teachers, not about teachers in charter schools. The city would benefit from maintaining data about teachers in both DCPS and the charter schools, including:

- years of experience,
- years with the school system,
- time in a specific school,
- teaching assignments,
- teacher attendance rates,
- education level and highest degree earned,
- area of certification, and
- an indicator of out-of-field teaching assignment(s).

Such information should be maintained for all teachers (those in charter schools as well as DCPS) in a manner that supports comparison across time and by ward. These data should be accessible to researchers, educators, parents, and the public.

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\*The committee's final version of wording for this conclusion was inadvertently not made prior to the release of the report.

### HAVE CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING IN THE SCHOOLS IMPROVED, PARTICULARLY FOR THE STUDENTS WITH THE GREATEST NEEDS?

The conditions that should be in place to promote learning encompass many factors, including: curriculum, standards, and academic resources; school climate, disciplinary policies, teachers' expectations; social and cognitive development beginning at the prenatal stage; physical and mental health; family and neighborhood circumstances, cultural traditions, and language; and socioeconomic status. We examined a set of topics chosen to reflect the broad scope of issues that should be monitored to ensure that all students have an equitable opportunity to learn.

The committee could find very little information about learning conditions in charter schools because many types of information are not collected systematically for this sector. We found slightly more information about DCPS schools but still saw many gaps in the information needed.

The limited information available to us shows evidence of efforts to improve learning conditions, but it also suggests that there are differences across student groups and wards in access to educational opportunity and the quality of the educational experience. Of significant concern is that fact that no one entity has both the responsibility and the authority for monitoring the provision of education and supports for students, particularly those at risk for school failure, across DCPS and the charter schools. There is a need for a single entity to be responsible for this essential function for all public schools and students, DCPS and charter. To meet this responsibility, the entity in charge will need to maintain and make publicly accessible data about students with particular needs, including those with disabilities, English-language learners, students in poverty, and other groups of concern; school climate, including discipline, attendance, safety, and facilities; and academic supports for learning.

**CONCLUSION 5-1** There is evidence of efforts to improve learning conditions in the city's public schools, but there is also evidence of notable disparities in students' educational experiences across student groups and wards.

**CONCLUSION 5-2** The governance structure with respect to learning opportunities in the city's schools is diffuse. No one body has both the responsibility and the authority for monitoring the provision of education and supports for students, particularly those at risk for school failure, across DCPS and the charter schools. Oversight of the ways all public schools are addressing the needs of these students is variable and in some cases minimal.

**CONCLUSION 5-3** To effectively pursue the goal of ensuring that all students have an equitable opportunity to learn, the city will need to maintain, and make publicly accessible, systematic data for three topics:

1. **Students with particular needs, including those with disabilities, English-language learners, and students in poverty.** Topics to monitor include compliance with federal requirements, provision of appropriate education and supports, identification of students in need of support, and the availability of educators with needed credentials and expertise.
2. **School climate, including discipline, attendance, safety, and facilities.** Topics to monitor include trends over time; the nature and magnitude of problems; distribution of problems across schools, wards, and LEAs; availability of relevant professional development; outcomes for students affected by problems in these areas; and indicators of equity in facilities and resources such as technological supports, classroom capacity, and other essential building components.
3. **Academic supports for learning.** Topics to monitor include equity of access to rigorous coursework at all grade levels; access to supports for struggling students; and access to resources designed to promote on-time graduation, college success, and successful career entry.

For each of these topics information that is useful and accessible to researchers, educators, parents, and the public should be readily available. It should be presented in a way that allows comparisons over time and analysis of patterns for aggregated and disaggregated student groups, including students in DCPS and charter schools and students and schools across wards.

### WHAT DOES THE EVIDENCE SHOW ABOUT OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS?

In order to understand outcomes for students it is important to look not only at the most readily available information—test data and graduation rates—but also at other indicators of outcomes and attainment, including indicators of school behavior and postsecondary attainment. The committee did not have the data needed to examine most of this information.

Data from the District of Columbia Comprehensive Assessment System (DC CAS) show that the percentage of all students scoring proficient or above in reading and math increased between 2007 and 2014. The increase

is larger for math than it is for reading. The positive trends are also apparent in data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). However, black and Hispanic students, those with disabilities, those eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, and English-language learners are much more likely to be in the lowest performance categories than other students. Some improvement is evident since 2009, but more than half of these students still score below proficient. There is little indication that these performance disparities are lessening.

Graduation rates have fluctuated from year to year, with no discernable pattern, but they remain disturbingly low: in 2014, slightly more than 60 percent of the city's DCPS and charter school students graduated. Graduation rates for students with disabilities and those eligible for free or reduced-price lunches were even lower, 40 and 53 percent, respectively.

Although we can document some of the changes that occurred over the past 7 years, we cannot determine the independent effects of PERAA on achievement and attainment. Changes in the demographic composition of D.C.'s public school students, the growth of the charter sector, differences in the programmatic choices made in DCPS and the individual charter schools, and many other changes that have occurred are intertwined with the changes brought by PERAA. Disentangling causes and effects among these developments is not possible. The signs of improvement are positive, but a more complete picture of student outcomes is needed. To better understand outcomes for D.C. students, the city needs to make data available that will cover a range of outcomes and allow detailed analyses of trends across time and among student groups.

**CONCLUSION 6-1** The percentage of all students scoring proficient or above in reading and math on the DC CAS increased between 2007 and 2014. The increase is larger for math than it is for reading. The positive trends are also apparent on NAEP.

**CONCLUSION 6-2** There is a stark difference in the overall performance and score distributions among different groups of students. Black and Hispanic students, those with disabilities, those eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, and English-language learners are much more likely to be in the lowest performance categories than other students. Some improvement is evident since 2009, but more than half of these students still score below proficient. There is little indication that these gaps are narrowing significantly.

**CONCLUSION 6-3** Publicly available reports of DC CAS results often highlight only the overall proficiency rate—the percentage of students who score proficient or above. The proficiency rate provides only a

quick overview of results. It does not reveal information about other changes in student performance, such as the percentage of students who score in each performance level or the percentage of students who score just below the proficient level. Proficiency rates can mask important changes in the performance of the lowest-scoring students and disparities in achievement among student groups, which are both important for decision making. Additional measures—such as the percentages of students who score at each performance level and scale scores—are also needed for decision making.

**CONCLUSION 6-4** Graduation rates have fluctuated in the years since PERAA, with no clear discernible trend; this has occurred at a time when national rates have been increasing. The D.C. rates remain disturbingly low for black and Hispanic students, those with disabilities, those eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, and English-language learners.

**CONCLUSION 6-5** The committee's evaluation was limited to a few blunt measures—proficiency rates on standardized tests and high school graduation rates—because of lack of data. To better understand outcomes for D.C. students, the city needs to collect and make data available on the following topics:

- the percentage of students who score at each performance level and information on the scale scores, including the percentage of students who score at each scale score, means, standard deviations, percentiles, and quartiles;
- attendance and truancy;
- course-taking and completion;
- college entrance exam performance;
- college enrollment and progression such as that available through the National Student Clearinghouse; and
- career outcomes such as employment and earnings/salary.

These data should be provided in a format that makes them useful and accessible to researchers, educators, parents, and the public. The format should allow them to be analyzed by year, school, grade, racial and ethnic group, poverty status, and English-language learner and special education status, as well as by sector (charter and DCPS public schools).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee saw reasons for optimism about the future for D.C.'s public schools. DCPS and the PCSB have made choices that show promise, and the city has sustained its focus on its improvement over several leadership changes. Nevertheless, we saw clear evidence that significant disparities in the conditions for learning and in progress for students persist, and this is the primary challenge for D.C.'s public education system.

Our evaluation highlights several areas of concern:

- Monitoring and oversight of the needs of students with particular needs, including students with disabilities, English-language learners, low-income students, and others is not adequate.
- DCPS schools in the lowest income sections of the city have less access to teachers with high IMPACT ratings and advanced coursework than other DCPS schools; there were no data available on this issue for the charter schools.
- There are stark gaps in academic achievement and graduation rates across student groups.

We offer three recommendations and some observations that we hope will help the city build on the work it has already done to address these fundamental challenges.

A persistent theme in our conclusions is the need for improvement in the way the city collects and uses information about public education. We have noted throughout the report that a significant array of data, documentation, and reports concerning the city's schools is available, but these materials are widely scattered and not structured to support districtwide evaluation. The city seems to be continually strengthening its data collection, yet many types of information are either apparently not collected or not accessible. More important, however, is that no one entity is currently responsible for coordinating information from across the education agencies and across all the public schools.

Whatever governance structure in place, a reliable source of comprehensive information about the functioning of the public schools will be crucial to improving monitoring and accountability. With ready access to complete and up-to-date information, parents and others could much more easily identify the most pressing issues in the schools and use that information to work with city officials to pursue improvements. More accessible data would also reveal progress the city is making in education, and greater accessibility would likely build public trust and patience during the time it takes to pursue lasting change.

**RECOMMENDATION 1** The District of Columbia should have a comprehensive data warehouse that makes basic information about the school system available in one place. That information should be readily accessible online to parents, the community, and researchers. That information should include data on the school system as a whole and at more detailed levels. Building such a warehouse will take time, but it can begin with the data collection efforts already in place. An optimal data warehouse would have the following characteristics:

- It would integrate and track data that are relevant to schooling and students across DCPS and the charter schools and eventually across the education, justice, and human service agencies.
- It would provide data about learning conditions in all public schools, DCPS and the charters, and their students, covering students with particular needs, including those with disabilities, English language learners, and students in poverty; school climate, including discipline, attendance, safety, and facilities; and academic supports for learning.
- It would provide data about outcomes for all public school students, in DCPS and the charters, covering graduation rates, performance on tests including college entrance exams, attendance and truancy, course-taking and completion, college enrollment and progression, and career outcomes.
- It would be usable and accessible to researchers, educators, parents, and the public. The format would be structured to allow ready access to data and analysis in ways that can be customized to the needs of different users, including parents and other nonspecialists.

PERAA called for an interagency coordinating body to develop a data warehouse of this type. Our recommendation for a centralized data warehouse is more comprehensive than PERAA's specifications, and we believe that it should serve a broader purpose: it should not be used only for coordinating data across city agencies, but also for allowing the city to more effectively monitor all of its public schools and students. It will take time to build such a warehouse, but the city has made progress on which to build, and a good next step would be to develop a single source for more complete basic data, aggregated and disaggregated, for DCPS and charter schools and students.

At present no single entity in D.C. is looking analytically at the way all the public school students are being educated. In carrying out its state functions, D.C. has the responsibility to look across all public school students and schools to make sure that certain basic conditions are provided. It is important to distinguish between a responsibility to ensure that basic condi-

tions are met and interference with the way DCPS or the chartering bodies make most of their decisions about how to fulfill their educational missions.

We recommend that the city monitor information about key elements of public schooling. D.C. functions as a state in which there are 62 school districts, but the city has a responsibility to collect and maintain systemwide data and use it to test progress toward a specified set of objectives necessary to ensuring an equitable education for all public school students. If the city does decide to have a single entity with responsibility across DCPS and the charter schools, it would be reasonable to consider transforming the Office of the State Superintendent of Education—although it currently has a number of problems—into that entity.

At the same time, the city would benefit from having access to ongoing, independent evaluations of its progress. A comprehensive data warehouse could be the foundation for such evaluation, as was recommended in the report on the first phase of this evaluation (National Research Council, 2011). That report recommended that D.C. consider developing a program of ongoing evaluation that includes long-term monitoring and public reporting of key indicators, as well as a portfolio of in-depth studies of high-priority issues, acknowledging that such a program would take time to develop.

This committee did not have the resources to collect school-level data, and this evaluation is an overview of the system for which we had to rely heavily on the data and other information provided by the education agencies. Based on the experience of carrying out this evaluation, we believe that the city would derive great benefit from having a program of ongoing evaluation. Such a program would benefit researchers and school leaders who could rely on the information and analysis it could provide on an ongoing basis. Other cities, including Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, and New York, have programs that provide independent data collection analysis. Each is structured differently, and their examples may be useful to D.C.

**RECOMMENDATION 2** The District of Columbia should establish institutional arrangements that will support ongoing independent evaluation of its education system. Whatever structure is developed, three conditions should be met:

- The evaluation entity should have sufficient resources to collect and analyze primary data, including at the school level, rather than being entirely dependent on city-generated test and administrative data.
- Evaluations should be conducted by experts with the qualifications needed for specific tasks. Ideally, the structure will allow the city to benefit from the expertise of external researchers and practitioners

who specialize in teaching and learning, curriculum, testing and measurement, and finance and policy.

- All products produced by the entity should undergo rigorous peer review.

The committee was not asked to make recommendations to the city about its governance structure, but we close with a set of points the city may wish to consider as it approaches the 10-year anniversary of PERAA. The 2015-2016 school year would be an excellent time to reflect on what has been accomplished under the new structure and what lessons have been learned that can accelerate the improvement begun with PERAA. PERAA provided the city with a structure it could use to make bold changes for rapid improvement, but a governance change by itself cannot be expected to bring about the desired improvement. The city has used PERAA's provisions, and its leaders have made many decisions that have shaped the path of the public schools in a positive way. The next step is to address the major long-standing challenges in education in D.C., which have been highlighted once again in our study.

**RECOMMENDATION 3** The primary objective of the District of Columbia for its public schools should be to address the serious and persistent disparities in learning opportunities and academic progress across student groups and wards by attending to

- centralized, systemwide monitoring and oversight of all public schools and their students, with particular attention to high-need student groups;
- the fair distribution of educational resources across schools and wards;
- ongoing assessment of how well strategies for improving teacher quality are meeting their goals;
- more effective collaboration among public agencies and with the private sector to encourage cross-sector problem solving for the city's schools;
- accessible, useful, and transparent data about D.C. public schools, including charters, that are tailored to the diverse groups with a stake in the system; and
- measures to strengthen public trust in education in a diverse, highly mobile city.

These issues are not new but they are at the heart of the findings from the committee's evaluation because they remain unchanged in spite of significant progress made in many areas in the years since PERAA. Meeting

the objectives we have identified will require commitment and a concerted effort on the part of D.C.'s leaders and residents to clarify their goals as they build on the accomplishments made under PERAA. This is the path for lasting benefits to the city's public school students.



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## Appendix A

### Information Provided and Not Provided in Response to Committee Requests

As discussed throughout the report, the committee was often frustrated by its inability to obtain the information needed for our evaluation. Although many officials in the education agencies were helpful, there was neither a central office from which to request information nor any staff available to assist us in coordinating our requests. We made numerous requests to staff members at different levels within agencies and also shared an omnibus request with all agency heads and other staff to allow them to coordinate responses.

This appendix, Table A-1, covers only data and documentation that the committee requested from city offices. Information obtained independently by the committee, including material found on city websites, is discussed in the report.

The table first covers general issues and information and is then organized by chapter and topic. Throughout, information provided by the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) is for DCPS only, information provided by the Public Charter School Board (PCSB) is for charter schools only, and information provided by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) is for all public school students.

TABLE A-1 Information Provided and Not Provided to the Committee

Chapter/Topic	Information Provided <sup>a</sup>	Comments/Explanations <sup>d</sup>
General		
Assistance in coordinating information requests across agencies		No agency or city official was able to assist us by reviewing our requests, ensuring that they were directed to the right office, or coordinating city responses.
Aggregated data across all public school students (charter LEAs and DCPS), e.g., spreadsheets supporting LearnDC website		OSSE: <i>OSSE can provide aggregated data.</i> The aggregated data are posted at <a href="https://github.com/DC-OSSE/LearnDC/data">https://github.com/DC-OSSE/LearnDC/data</a> [Link not functional; upon follow-up, OSSE provided a JSON data file that was not usable.]
Chapter 2: Context for School Reform in D.C.		
Students: Counts for DCPS, charters, and state by student group, for 2006-2007 and 2013-2014	PCSB: Counts for student population by subgroup and total, 2013-2014	Totals from different agencies were not consistent
	OSSE: Counts for student population DCPS and charters, by race, special ed, FRPL, and ELL 2006-2007 and 2013-2014.	
Educators: Counts for DCPS, charters, state by type/grade configuration (pre-K, elementary, middle, high, classroom aides, principals, assistant principals)	OSSE: counts for educators, DCPS and charters, by category (pre-K, elementary, etc.), 2007-2008, 2013-2014	PCSB could not provide educator counts.
Schools: Counts for DCPS, charters, and state by type (pre-K elementary, middle, high, special)	OSSE: Counts for schools available at each grade level, DCPS and charters, 2006-2007 and 2013-2014	School counts difficult to reconcile—i.e., categories overlap

**Chapter 3: Coordination, Efficiency, and Lines of Authority**

Agency (DCPS central office, OSSE) staff counts, by division function, including any historical data available

OSSE: Current total staff count provided by e-mail; referred to fiscal 2015 operating budget

FTE counts by category are available in agency performance reports. These do not in all cases match the department titles within the agencies.

DCPS: teacher count provided by e-mail, referred to fiscal 2015 operating budget

No historical data were provided.

[PCSB, SBOE and DME staff info available on websites]

DCPS: Frequently asked questions regarding proposed fiscal 2015 uniform per student funding formula

Data on student mobility, across LEAs and into and out of DC public schools, disaggregated by student group

OSSE: *“[Mobility data] is not yet accurate or complete, and we are not comfortable sharing it until it is finalized. When it is in that shape, we will make it public (and share it with you). We don’t want to take the chance of sharing inaccurate data.”*

### Chapter 4: Improving Teacher Quality

<p>Data and documentation for IMPACT:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Annual reports (the IMPACT Results report by the DCPS) from years after 2010-2011</li> <li>2. Documentation about:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher professional growth plans or corrective action plans; numbers of teachers distributed into different LIFT stages; data management system</li> <li>Teacher and/or administrator participation in any type of oversight or evaluation of the IMPACT system; procedures teachers may use to challenge evaluations</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Documentation about the TAS component of IMPACT</li> <li>4. Documentation about the TLF</li> <li>5. Documentation about the CSC component</li> <li>6. Documentation about the CP component</li> <li>7. Documentation of target professional development opportunities for teachers (including focus area, scope/frequency, presenter experience, objectives, and targeted group) and percentage of targeted group who receive this development</li> </ol>	<p>DCPS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TAS guidance</li> <li>• Overview of master educator coaching</li> <li>• Sample master educator report</li> <li>• Documentation of master educator professional development and appeals process</li> <li>• LIFT data</li> <li>• Observations data</li> <li>• IMPACT ratings data</li> <li>• TAS resources for principals</li> <li>• SCS samples</li> <li>• POC rubric for master educators</li> <li>• Master educator job description</li> <li>• Overview of roster and caseload confirmation process</li> <li>• Access to a sample Align TLF module</li> <li>• Information about roster confirmation</li> <li>• Resources provided to school leaders for TAS</li> <li>• CSC examples from two schools</li> <li>• Data on IMPACT bonuses, IMPACTplus acceptance, with written explanation</li> <li>• TLF averages for teachers</li> </ul>	<p>DCPS responded quickly to our requests and provided much of what was requested.</p>
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## Chapter 5: Academic Opportunities

Data showing student access to advanced mathematics: calculus, statistics, algebra III/trigonometry. Can you provide number of schools that offer these courses and percentage of students (by graduating class) in those schools who enroll? We would like to have these data by ward as well so that we can have some measure of equity.

Data showing access to AP science courses: biology, chemistry, physics. Can you provide number of schools that offer these courses and percentage of students in those schools who enroll? We would like to have these data by ward as well so that we can have some measure of equity.

Criteria for entry into AP and/or IB courses, all subjects (do these differ from school to school?). Are there data by ward on participation in these higher-level courses and outcomes for students?

What benchmarks of college career readiness are tracked? How is any of the information collected used? Can you provide data associated with tracking of these benchmarks and outcomes for students?

As follow-up to interview, DCPS offered documentation: Overview of Teaching and Learning at DC Public Schools SY 2014-2015, and Curriculum and Assessment Overviews for grades 1 and 4

DCPS: Brief written response plus course descriptions for advanced mathematics courses and other secondary mathematics courses

DCPS: List of AP courses offered at each DCPS high school, enrollment data for AP

OSSE: number of schools offering AP courses, 2013-2014

DCPS: Written response from OTL gave numbers of students overall taking an AP exam 2010 and 2013 (their source was College Board report). OCS provided data on scores achieved (across all students) for 1990-2010, 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013.

DCPS:

- Written description of college readiness services
- DCPS data for AP/SAT participation and scores
- Written description of primary career and technical education focus areas and outcomes

PCSB: *[T]he committee will have to reach out to LEAs directly for this type of information.*

No information about science courses provided.

Criteria for entry not addressed, nothing by ward or subgroup. Everything appeared to be from College Board report.

Nothing provided—Pathways report publicly available. LearnDC also plans to track certain benchmarks but this not yet evident on its website.

<p>Data and documentation about programming and resources at alternative high schools. How are these schools defined? How many students are enrolled, what are criteria, how does academic programming differ from what is offered in regular high schools? What are academic options in these schools? What else is part of programming at these schools? Can you provide data on outcomes for students who attend these schools?</p>	<p>DCPS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brief descriptions of each alternative high school (also available on website)</li> <li>• Performance data for individual alternative schools (what was provided varied by school)</li> </ul>	<p>No specific information on programming or placement criteria; data on outcomes only for two schools</p>
<p>Professional Development: Documentation of target professional development opportunities for teachers (including focus area, scope/frequency, presenter experience, objectives, and targeted group) and percentage of targeted group who receive this development</p>	<p>DCPS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written description of professional development goals</li> <li>• Sample 2014 schedules for summer institute weeks, preservice week, and professional development days, January, May, and June</li> <li>• Sample professional development catalogs</li> </ul>	<p>DCPS: examples only—no data on participation or information on overall objectives</p>

### Chapter 5: Learning Conditions—Resources

- Teacher qualifications: teacher counts by teaching in area of certification, NBPTS certification, absenteeism/attendance
  - Class size or student:teacher ratio
  - Number/percentage of classrooms with an aide
  - Number of computers per school
  - Number/percentage of schools with access to school nurse
  - Percentage of schools with access to Internet (2012-2013)
  - Number/percentage of schools with gifted/talented program, tutoring, after-school programming, summer enrichment
  - Number/percentage of schools offering tutoring
- OSSE: Teacher counts by years of experience for 2007-2008 and 2012-2013
- PowerPoint for information session on requirements for highly qualified teachers and parent notification
- OSSE: Access to Internet 2012-2013
- OSSE: Number of schools with librarian and guidance counselor 2007-2008 and 2012-2013 (not percentage)
- DCPS: Documentation of role of social worker for elementary, middle, and high schools
- DCPS: Brief written explanation of policy

Any data available on mental health services available to DCPS and/or charter students

Social workers

Documentation and/or data to show DCPS targets for Internet and computer access in individual schools, and number/percentage of schools that meet the target. We would like to have these data by ward as well so that we can have some measure of equity.

### Chapter 5: Learning Conditions— Early Education

Programs for children from birth through pre-K—please provide data and/or documentation, including eligibility criteria and number of eligible students compared with number of places.

OSSE: number of schools offering early childhood education 2006-2007 and 2013-2014

DCPS: PS/PK enrollment for DCPS 2006-2007 and 2013-2014

PCSB: Number of charter campuses offering early childhood education, pre-K, or kindergarten, 2014-2015

DCPS Office of Specialized Instruction indicated that it is OSSE that has any data/documentation for children ages 0-3, and for charter students ages 3-kindergarten entry.

Measures for monitoring quality of programs, including family care—please provide documentation.

Educator qualifications—please provide documentation of criteria, data regarding qualifications of educator workforce.

DCPS and PCSB report that they do not have aggregated data on experience/qualifications of early childhood teachers, though all must meet OSSE certification standards.

Head Start

DCPS: Description of goals for provision of Head Start services

### Chapter 5: Learning Conditions—Special Education

<p>Number/percentage of schools offering special education services</p>	<p>OSSE: numbers of schools offering special ed programming for 2006-2007 and 2013-2014; student counts by disability category for DCPS and charter schools for 2013-2014</p>	<p>Information about class size or student:teacher ratio, availability of classroom aides, data or documentation about mainstreaming</p> <p>Any data available on academic or other supports for students with special needs, including ELLs, special education students, for DCPS and for charters</p>	<p>OSSE: At the October 25, 2013, meeting OSSE indicated that there are problems with some or all of these data. We asked to have whatever is available, along with a summary of any problems OSSE sees with the data. On March 19, 2014, they indicated that <i>This is handled at the individual LEA basis and OSSE doesn't have records on exactly what is done at each school. OSSE has Title I and III plans and the equivalent for IDEA and will provide. [Did not receive.]</i></p>
<p>Documentation of changing policies with respect to accommodations</p>	<p>PCSB: <i>All schools are required to offer a full continuum of services.</i></p> <p>DCPS: The document, <i>Programs and Resources Guide for Staff</i>, describes programs, resources, and processes.</p>	<p>OSSE: Identification, placement, exit, and monitoring policy</p>	<p>OSSE: <i>All known issues are published on the US Department of Education website, with the most substantial issue being reduction and finally the elimination of the historical read aloud accommodation.</i></p>

<p>Placement—movement of students in and out of district/private placement, and movement of students between DCPS and charters.</p> <p>Please provide data on student mobility as well as documentation of policies regarding such moves.</p> <p>Qualifications and experience of special education teachers—please provide information about how your office tracks this as well as data on numbers of qualified special education teachers, as well as general education teachers who are trained in special education.</p> <p>Professional development provided for all special education teachers—please provide documentation of the nature of the professional development (including focus area, scope/frequency, presenter experience, objectives, and targeted group) and percentage of targeted group who receive this development.</p> <p>Meeting key federal requirements for serving students with disabilities: please provide information on (1) procedural compliance issues related to teaching and learning and (2) educational outcomes for students with disabilities.</p>	<p>DCPS: Office of Specialized Instruction indicated that it is OSSE that tracks the movement of students between DCPS and charters, or out of system.</p> <p>OSSE: This was not actually provided, though OSSE indicated it would be provided.</p> <p>DCPS: <i>We do not have a way to pull an aggregate report to show level of experience, however, teachers must be certified according to OSSE standards. DCPS does not have trouble recruiting and hiring qualified special education teachers to fill vacancies.</i></p>
<p>DCPS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation of professional development offered, including 2013-2014 calendar</li> <li>• <i>Programs and Resources Guide for Staff</i></li> </ul>	<p>DCPS: <i>Professional development for special education staff was not tracked in 2006-2007.</i></p>
<p>DCPS: Written response describing efforts under way to achieve procedural compliance</p>	<p>OSSE: <i>The primary IDEA reporting is through ED Facts—002, 004, 005, 006, 007, 009 (see <a href="http://www2.ed.gov/about/initiatives/edfacts/sy-12-13-nonxml.html">http://www2.ed.gov/about/initiatives/edfacts/sy-12-13-nonxml.html</a> for descriptions) and through the APR (<a href="http://osse.dc.gov/service/specialized-education-data-and-reports">http://osse.dc.gov/service/specialized-education-data-and-reports</a>).</i></p>

What is the impact of having DCPS serve as the service provider for students with disabilities in charter schools?

DCPS: Written response

Academic supports provided to language learning students with special needs—please provide documentation.

DCPS: Documentation of recommendations for the coordination of services for English-language learners with special needs

**Chapter 5: Learning Conditions—English-Language Learners**

Number and percentage of schools offering ELL services

OSSE:

- Number of schools offering ELL services, DCPS and charters (no percentages)
- PowerPoint summary of 2012 ELL testing data (DC CAS math, access for ELLs, enrollment)

PCSB: *All schools are required to provide ELL services to students of eligible age.*

Information about class size, student:teacher ratio for ELL students

Number/percentage of ELL classes with classroom aide

Identification—please provide documentation of the criteria used to place or classify students. At what fluency level do students stop receiving supports?

DCPS:

- Written response describing procedures for classifying and placing students
- Copy of Home Language Survey
- Completion procedures prepared for local schools

Qualifications and experience of ESOL teachers, bilingual teachers

DCPS: Written response describing required qualifications and experience of ESOL teachers

How is academic progress of nonfluent students monitored, e.g., in mathematics, science, etc.?

DCPS: Written response describing means of measuring academic progress of nonfluent students in academic subjects

OSSE: Provided identification, placement, exit, and monitoring policy

## Chapter 6: Outcomes—Academic Outcomes

Achievement trends

OSSE:

- 2013-2014 DC-CAS percentage proficient by subgroup (not broken down by grade), reading/language arts and mathematics for DCPS, charters, and total
- SAT and ACT results for students in D.C., PCSB, and DCPS by subgroup—number of test takers, mean scores, participation rate, for 2006 and 2013
- AP participation and pass rates for DCPS and PCSB by subgroup for 2006 and 2013

Test Security:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written summary of overall numbers for each year: how many classrooms (or testing groups) had wrong-to-right erasure rates above the 3-standard deviation level; how many classrooms were investigated; and how many classroom investigations resulted in student data being invalidated? And for those “how many” figures, we would also like to know how many students were involved with each set of classroom numbers and what proportion they represent of the overall number of tested students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explanation of flagging methodology and changes in that</li> <li>• Investigations that have been done and their results</li> <li>• A description of the method used in the test security investigation</li> <li>• A copy of the final report of the investigation</li> <li>• Access to all investigative files</li> <li>• A dataset listing the students or teachers flagged for having potentially problematic test results found in the investigation, using masked identifiers that can be linked to masked identifiers in the student data provided by OSSE to AIR and the teacher data provided by DCPS to Mathematica</li> </ul>
Written responses we received:	<p>DCPS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Memorandum summarizing DC CAS investigations and test security reviews for DCPS</li> <li>• Caveon reports for 2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012</li> <li>• Summary of 2010 Caveon findings and DCPS actions</li> <li>• Caveon clarification statement March 28, 2011</li> <li>• Links to press releases announcing report releases</li> </ul> <p>OSSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Description of Test Integrity Flagging Methodology SY 2012-2013 DC CAS</li> <li>• PowerPoint summary descriptions of investigation DC CAS SY 2011-2012</li> <li>• Documentation of security incidents reported for 2011</li> </ul>	<p>OSSE: <i>The replication of analysis would take time, and given the differences in test score processing procedures in place at the time would not match the originally determined statistical scores.</i></p> <p>AIR <i>originally did the test score analysis, and both seemed to lose some scores along the way and not document their processes prior to the 2011-2012 test integrity analysis. They also have made substantial errors in some of their historical documents so I can't speak to their accuracy in analysis on the test integrity issues. OSSE can't replicate the AIR numbers. We could run the analysis we have now, but it would take substantial time and accordingly probably cost us a sum of money as we outsource some of our psychometric analysis.</i></p> <p>DCPS: <i>Information about employees flagged by the OSSE is available from the OSSE. The OSSE also makes the final decision about which scores are invalidated for the purposes of Annual Measurable Objectives under the 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, also known as No Child Left Behind. The OSSE then reports that data publicly, including to federal government.</i></p>

*With regard to the data file shared with Mathematica for value-added calculations: due to a time lag between testing and investigations, it has rarely been possible to remove test results from the data file sent to Mathematica for value-added calculations in the same year as testing occurred. Scores are invalidated later (after investigations). This means that the following year, employees teaching students with invalidated scores are not held accountable for value added to a potentially inflated baseline. DCPS requests Mathematica exclude any data that needs to be removed because of test integrity concerns. Mathematica should therefore already be excluding potentially problematic test results from its calculations.*

OSSE reported that they had made a policy adjustment with respect to calculating graduation rates and were planning to retroactively adjust the previous rates—but then had decided not to do this. OSSE subsequently reported that they can provide graduation rates for the time period from when they were first adjusted to the present but cannot go back to 2006-2007. Some data were provided.

OSSE: Number of graduates for DCPS and charters for 2006-2007 and 2013-2014 by race and FRPL (some cells missing).

Graduation: Number/percentage of students who graduated, by subgroup

## Chapter 6: Outcomes—Nonacademic Outcomes

Noncognitive student outcomes for all evaluation years, including attendance, truancy, and disciplinary behavior/actions, in-school suspensions: Please provide data and/or documentation about policies regarding these areas and prevalence/incidence rates. Data by ward would be particularly helpful.

Documentation of goals/philosophy with respect to discipline: Is there a uniform discipline code or other guidance in interpreting whatever data you are able to share? Are there behaviors or incidents that have automatic required responses? Please describe the degree of flexibility schools have in making discipline decisions.

### Retention in grade

NOTES: AIR, American Institutes for Research; AP, advanced placement; CP, core professionalism; CSC, commitment to school community; DCPS, District of Columbia Public Schools; DME, Deputy Mayor for Education; ELL, English-language learners; ESOL, English as a second language; FRPL, eligible for free and reduced-price lunch; FTE, full-time equivalent; FY, fiscal year; IB, international baccalaureate; LEA, local education agency; LIFT, Leadership Initiative for Teachers; OSSE, Office of the State Superintendent of Education; OTL opportunity to learn; PCSB, Public Charter School Board; POC, point of contact; SBOE, State Board of Education; TAS, teacher-assessed student achievement data; TLF, teacher learning framework.

*Text in italics is verbatim from responses supplied to the committee.*

OSSE notes data exist only for 2012-2013 due to data quality issues.

OSSE: Number of truancy and discipline incidents for 2012-2013 for DCPS and PCSB (elementary, middle, high school, and total)

### PCSB:

- 2013-2014 attendance percentages for elementary, middle, and high schools
- Incidents of truancy for elementary, middle, and high schools
- Discipline incidents for elementary, middle, and high schools

### DCPS:

- Written description of current suspension data
- Strategy of the Office of Student Engagement
- Summary of discipline, goals/philosophy



## Appendix B

### Sample Interview Protocol

The committee and its contractors conducted a total of 44 interviews with a wide range of people who are involved with the school system in D.C., including officials and other employees in city education agencies and community members who have been active in public education-related work (see Chapter 1). They were asked a range of questions about their experiences and views of the Public Education Reform Amendment Act (PERAA), with somewhat different interview protocols, depending on the interviewees' roles.

This appendix reproduces an example of the interview protocols used in the interviews conducted by the committee and staff with city leaders: see Chapter 1 for a discussion of the interviews.

## INTERVIEW TOPICS

As you know, the National Research Council is conducting an evaluation of how D.C.'s schools are faring since PERAA was passed that draws on a variety of information. To understand how PERAA's reforms are operating on the ground and to help us in interpreting the information we've been collecting, we are interviewing a sample of those most directly involved in implementing reforms. Your responses will be kept confidential: nothing you say will be attributed to you personally or to your office.

Although we have some familiarity with the responsibilities of your office, in our interview, we would like to get a better sense of the details of your work.

1. Of all the functions for which your office is responsible, which ones have been the most central to the smooth implementation of PERAA?
2. [*Ask as appropriate, given responses to the first question.*]

You've mentioned your office's most important functions, now we would like to ask you in greater detail about some of those activities [*and also about a few others that have come up in our research.*]

- a. Could you briefly describe the process by which the IMPACT system was developed, and the most important factors that influenced its design?

- PROBES:
- objectives that DCPS leadership hoped to accomplish with IMPACT
  - desired balance between evaluation and support/professional development in the system's design
  - sources for the ideas and assumptions about how IMPACT would work
  - research and other types of evidence used to inform its development
  - role of Mathematica in IMPACT's development as compared with that of DCPS staff

- how IMPACT was validated and piloted, including who was asked to provide feedback on its initial results
- b. To what extent has IMPACT lived up to your expectations as a strategy for ensuring effective teaching?

PROBES: • any problems with its implementation (e.g., resource and time requirements; level of observers' preparation and expertise; other technical, administrative, or political challenges)

- teachers' responses to IMPACT
  - public and media reactions
  - effects on the overall quality of the teacher workforce in DCPS
  - relationship to student learning outcomes
- c. Have any aspects of IMPACT been significantly modified since its initial implementation?

If yes: — what was the impetus for the modifications?

- d. IMPACT seems to be one of the most controversial of the PERAA-related reforms, including being subject to considerable media scrutiny. Why do you think that has been the case?

To what extent are criticisms of either the technical quality of IMPACT or assertions that it is unfair to teachers valid?

3. a. What have been the main strategies in DCPS' efforts to strengthen the quality of school leadership?

PROBES: • principal recruitment strategies and selection criteria

- impetus for recent changes in the evaluation system for principals

- b. What would you describe as the main differences between the characteristics of school principals prior to PERAA and those currently leading DCPS schools?
  - c. Some commentators have questioned the relatively high level of turnover in DCPS principalships since PERAA's enactment. How do you respond to that concern?
4. a. In considering all the changes that have been implemented in D.C. since PERAA, which ones do you think have been especially effective in accomplishing their intended purpose?

PROBE: • likely reasons for their success

- b. Are there others that have fallen short of expectations or that have been particularly difficult to implement?

PROBE: • likely reasons for their shortfall

- c. In deciding whether or not PERAA-related initiatives are effective, what criteria or yardsticks do you use?

e.g., — evidence that student outcome measures are moving in a positive direction

— that specific goals set by the city or the State Board are being met

— how D.C.'s performance compares with that of other urban districts

5. Finally, what are the biggest lessons that you take away from your work in DCPS thus far?

## Appendix C\*

### The Public Education Reform Amendment Act and Relevant Amendments

As noted in Chapter 3, the committee was unable to find any document or website that presented the original text of the Public Education Reform Amendment Act (PERAA) in its entirety and all changes to it since its 2007 adoption. Since our work required the best up-to-date information we could obtain about the current state of PERAA, the committee asked Colleen Robinson of Boston College to compile this appendix.

She began with PERAA as passed in 2007 and looked up each section in the current District of Columbia Official Code. Sections or words indicated with a strikethrough were amended and are no longer included in the D.C. Official Code. Revisions or additions to the law are underlined to show all changes since the law was adopted that could be identified. Since PERAA is constantly evolving, it is important to note that this analysis is current as of January 1, 2015.

In addition to helping our work, we believe this document will be useful to readers who want a picture of how PERAA has changed since it was initially enacted.

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\*The contents of Appendix C—pages 248-280—are available at <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/21743/an-evaluation-of-the-public-schools-of-the-district-of-columbia>.

**PUBLIC EDUCATION  
REFORM AMENDMENT ACT OF 2007  
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<sup>1</sup> This researcher began with PERAA as passed in 2007 and looked up each section in the current District of Columbia Official Code. Sections or words indicated with a strikethrough were amended and are no longer included in the D.C. Official Code. Revisions or additions to the law are underlined to demonstrate how the law has changed. This document will be useful to a reader that wants a picture of how PERAA has changed in nine years since it was initially passed into law.

<sup>2</sup> The law is constantly evolving and it is important to note that this analysis is current as of January 1, 2015.

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## AN ACT

## IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

To establish the District of Columbia Public Schools as a cabinet-level agency subordinate to the Mayor, to create a Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools, and to establish a Department of Education headed by a Deputy Mayor for Education; to amend the State Education Office Establishment Act of 2000 to change the name of the State Education Office to the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, and to transfer and assign state-level education agency functions to the State Superintendent of Education Office; to repeal the Adult Education Designation Amendment Act of 1998; to amend the Early Prevention Program Establishment Act of 2004 to provide that the Early Intervention Program shall be an office of and administered by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education; to establish a new State Board of Education; to create an Interagency Collaboration and Services Integration Commission to address the needs of at-risk children by reducing juvenile and family violence through a comprehensive integrated service delivery system; to create an Office of Ombudsman for Public Education to serve as a communication and problem-resolution mechanism for residents regarding issues related to public education; to create an Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization to manage school modernization projects; to amend the District of Columbia School Reform Act of 1995 to enable existing public charter schools authorized under the Public Charter Schools Act of 1996 to remain charters without a petition, to establish the Office of the State Superintendent of Education as an office of appeal of a denial of a public school charter, to require a performance review of a public charter school every 5 years, and to clarify that a chartering authority may revoke a school charter for insufficient academic performance; to repeal the Public Charter Schools Act of 1996; to amend the District of Columbia Home Rule Act to repeal section 452 regarding the District of Columbia Public Schools Budget and section 495 regarding the District of Columbia Board of Education; to amend the District of Columbia Government Comprehensive Merit Personnel Act of 1978, the District of Columbia Procurement Practices Act of 1985, An Act To fix and regulate the salaries of teachers, school officers, and other employees of the board of education of the District of Columbia, An Act To authorize appointment of public-school employees between meetings of the Board of Education, the District of Columbia Appropriations Act, 1995, the District of Columbia Board of Education School Seal Act of 1978, the Budget Support Act of 1995, the District of Columbia Public School Support Initiative of 1986, the School Based Budgeting and Accountability Act of 1998, and the School Modernization Financing Act of 2006 to make conforming amendments.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this act may be cited as the "Public Education Reform Amendment Act of 2007".

TITLE I. ESTABLISHMENT OF DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS AGENCY

Sec. 101. Short title.

This title may be cited as the "District of Columbia Public Schools Agency Establishment Act of 2007".

Sec. 102. District of Columbia Public Schools agency; establishment.

Pursuant to section 404(b) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December 24, 1973 (87 Stat.787; D.C. Official Code § 1-204.04(b)) ("Home Rule Act"), the Council establishes the District of Columbia Public Schools ("DCPS") as a separate cabinet-level agency, subordinate to the Mayor, within the executive branch of the District of Columbia government.

Sec. 103. Mayor's authority; rulemaking.

(a) The Mayor shall govern the public schools in the District of Columbia. The Mayor shall have authority over all curricula, operations, functions, budget, personnel, labor negotiations and collective bargaining agreements, facilities, and other education-related matters, but shall endeavor to keep teachers in place after the start of the school year and transfer teachers, if necessary, during summer break.

(b) The Mayor may delegate any of his authority to a designee as he or she determines is warranted for efficient and sound administration and to further the purpose of DCPS to educate all students enrolled within its schools or learning centers consistent with District-wide standards of academic achievement.

(c) (1) In accordance with the District of Columbia Administrative Procedure Act, approved October 21, 1968 (82 Stat. 1204; D.C. Official Code § 2-501 *et seq.*), the Mayor shall promulgate rules and regulations governing DCPS, including rules governing the process by which the Mayor and DCPS will seek and utilize public comment in the development of policy.

(2) Proposed rules shall be submitted to the Council for a 45-day period of review. If the Council does not approve or disapprove the proposed rules, by resolution, within the 45-day review period, the proposed rules shall be deemed approved.

Sec. 104. Budget requirements of the District of Columbia Public Schools.

(a) The Mayor shall submit the budget for DCPS pursuant to section 442 of the Home Rule Act, along with a plan detailing the allocation of funds to each DCPS public school by program and activity level and comptroller source group.

(b) The Council may, following its review of the plan submitted pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, modify the funding and other resource levels, including full-time equivalent allocations, allocated by the plan to individual schools by a 2/3 majority vote of the Council.

(c) For fiscal year 2009, the Council may reallocate funds on a program level, but shall not make adjustments to activity costs within a program level; provided, that this restriction shall not apply to Special Education State, or any other local or state special education category the Mayor may designate.

(d) Beginning with fiscal year 2010, for each program level, the Mayor shall submit:

- (1) Actual expenditures for the prior school year;
- (2) Estimated expenditures for the current school year; and
- (3) Projected expenditures for the following school year.

## Sec. 105. Chancellor; appointment; duties.

(a) The DCPS shall be administered by a Chancellor, who shall be appointed pursuant to section 2(a) of the Confirmation Act of 1978, effective March 3, 1979 (D.C. Law 2-142; D.C. Official Code § 1-523.01(a)), and in accordance with subsection (b) of this section. The Chancellor shall:

- (1) Be the chief executive officer of DCPS;
- (2) Be qualified by experience and training for the position; and
- (3) Serve at the pleasure of the Mayor.

(b)(1) Prior to the selection of a nominee for Chancellor, the Mayor shall:

(A) Establish a review panel of teachers, including representatives of the Washington Teachers Union, parents, and students ("panel") to aid the Mayor in his or her selection of Chancellor;

(B) Provide the resumes and other pertinent information pertaining to the individuals under consideration, if any, to the panel; and

(C) Convene a meeting of the panel to hear the opinions and recommendations of the panel.

(2) The Mayor shall consider the opinions and recommendations of the panel in making his or her nomination and shall give great weight to any recommendation of the Washington Teachers Union.

(c) The duties of the Chancellor shall include to:

- (1) Organize the agency for efficient operation;
- (2) Create offices within the agency, as necessary;
- (3) Exercise the powers necessary and appropriate to operate the schools and school system and to implement applicable provisions of District and federal law;
- (4) Communicate with the collective bargaining unit for the employees under his or her administration;

(5) Promulgate and implement rules and regulations necessary and appropriate to accomplish his or her duties and functions in accordance with section 103 and the District of Columbia Administrative Procedure Act, approved October 21, 1968 (82 Stat. 1204; D.C. Official Code § 2-501 *et seq.*);

(6) Obtain parental input as required by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, approved January 8, 2002 (Pub. L. No. 107-110; 115 Stat. 1425), and in accordance with the rules promulgated pursuant to this title;

(7) Hold public meetings, at least quarterly;

(8) Exercise, to the extent that such authority is delegated by the Mayor,:

(A) Personnel authority; and

(B) Procurement authority independent of the Office of Contracting and Procurement, consistent with the District of Columbia Procurement Practices Act of 1985, effective February 21, 1986 (D.C. Law 6-85; D.C. Official Code § 2-301.01 *et seq.*);

(9) Maintain clean and safe school facilities; and

(10) Create and operate a District-wide database that records the condition of all school facilities under the control of DCPS, which database shall be updated as necessary, but at least once per calendar year.

## Sec. 106. Transfers; continuation.

(a) All functions, authority, programs, positions, personnel, property, records, and unexpended balances of appropriations, allocations, and other funds available or to be made available to the Board of Education, as the local education agency, established pursuant to section 495 of the Home Rule Act for the purpose of providing educational services to residents of the District of Columbia are transferred to the Mayor.

(b) All rules, orders, obligations, determinations, grants, contracts, licenses, and agreements of the Board of Education and the District of Columbia Public Schools transferred to the Mayor under subsection (a) of this section shall continue in effect according to their terms until lawfully amended, repealed, or modified.

## Sec. 107. Applicability.

This title shall apply upon Congressional enactment of Title IX.

## TITLE. II. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## Sec. 201. Short title.

This title may be cited as the "Department of Education Establishment Act of 2007".

## Sec. 202. Department of Education; establishment; authority.

(a) Pursuant to section 404(b) of the Home Rule Act, the Council establishes a Department of Education, subordinate to the Mayor. The department shall be headed by a Deputy Mayor for Education, who shall be appointed pursuant to section 2(a) of the Confirmation Act of 1978, effective March 3, 1979 (D.C. Law 2-142; D.C. Official Code § 1- 523.01(a)).

(b) The Department of Education shall:

(1) Have oversight of the:

(A) State Superintendent of Education Office;

(B) Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization; and

(C) ~~Office of Ombudsman for Public Education; and~~

(D) Development of a comprehensive, District-wide data system that

integrates and tracks data across education, justice, and human service agencies.

(2) Be responsible for the planning, coordination, and supervision of all public education and education-related activities under its jurisdiction, including development and support of programs to improve the delivery of educational services and opportunities, from early childhood to the post-secondary education level; including the District of Columbia Public Schools, public charter schools, and the University of the District of Columbia; provided, that nothing in this title shall be interpreted to grant to the Mayor any authority over the University of the District of Columbia that is currently vested in the Board of Trustees of the University of the District of Columbia;

(3) Promote, coordinate, and oversee collaborative efforts among District government agencies to support education and child development as it relates to education, including coordinating the integration of programs and resources;

(4) Coordinate programs, policies, and objectives of the Mayor with the Board of Trustees of the University of the District of Columbia;

(5) Promote, coordinate, and oversee the enhancement and quality of workforce preparation programs within the State Superintendent of Education Office;

(6) Promote, coordinate, and oversee the enhancement and quality of adult literacy and adult education programs within the State Superintendent of Education Office; and

(7) Submit to the Mayor, Chancellor, State Board of Education, and the Council the reports required by section 604(14) and (15); and.

(e)(8) Coordinate the development of the Master Facilities Plan.

(c) By December 31, 2009, the Deputy Mayor for Education shall submit to the Council for approval, by resolution, and to the State Board of Education for review, a plan describing the framework that it shall use to develop a statewide, strategic education and youth development plan ("EYD plan").

(d) By September 30, 2010, the Deputy Mayor for Education shall submit to the Council for approval, by resolution, and to the State Board of Education for review, the EYD plan, which shall include:

(1) A clearly articulated vision statement for children and youth from zero to 24 years of age;

(2) Stated goals and operational priorities;

(3) An assessment of needs, including a showing that the comprehensive strategy to address the stated needs is based on research and data;

(4) A timeline and benchmarks for planning and implementation;

(5) An operational framework that provides for shared accountability, broad-based civic community involvement, and coordination:

(A) With District, school, and other community efforts;

(B) With key stakeholders throughout the community, including those in top public and civic

leadership;

(C) Of the education sector with housing, health, and welfare;

(D) With economic development policies and plans; and

(E) Of multiple funding streams to ensure sustainability of the EYD plan;

(6) An explication of the location and planning, including intended use and design, for the District's educational facilities and campuses; and

(7) Recommendations for policy and legislative changes, if needed, to increase the effectiveness of the EYD plan.

(e) The Mayor shall review and update the EYD plan every 3 years and submit the plan to the Council for approval, by resolution, and to the State Board of Education for review

### Sec. 203. Special education; reporting requirement.

Within 60 days of the effective date of this title, the Department of Education shall report to the Mayor and the Council on the status of:

(1) The Special Education Task Force, and the development of the Special Education Reform Plan, established pursuant to section 372 of the Special Education Task Force Establishment Act of 2003, effective November 13, 2003 (D.C. Law 15-39; D.C. Official Code § 38-2551); and

(2) The implementation of the recommendations adopted by the Board of Education pursuant to the resolution Adopting the Recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on Special Education White Paper and Other Recommendations to Improve the Delivery of Special Education Services within the District of Columbia Public Schools, effective March 13, 2006 (Board of Education resolution SR06-22).

### Sec. 204. Evaluation and re-authorization.

~~(a)(1) Except as provided in subsection (b) of this section, the Mayor shall submit to the Council by September 15 of each year, beginning in 2008, projected benchmarks by which to measure annual achievements within District of Columbia Public Schools. By October 1 of each year, beginning in 2009, and every year thereafter, an evaluator shall be retained to conduct an independent evaluation of District~~

of Columbia Public Schools ("DCPS") and of any affiliated reform efforts. The evaluation shall be conducted according to the standard practices of the evaluator, with full cooperation of the Council, Mayor, Chancellor, State Superintendent of Education, and other government personnel.

~~(i) (2) (The annual assessment shall include an evaluation of: A) The Mayor shall submit to the Council by September 30 of each year, beginning in 2008, an annual evaluation of District of Columbia Public Schools that includes an assessment of:~~

~~(iii) (A) Business practices;~~

~~(iii) (B) Human resources operations and human capital strategies;~~

~~(C) All academic plans; and~~

~~(D) The annual achievements progress made as measured against the benchmarks submitted the previous year in accordance with paragraph (1) of this subsection, including a detailed description of student achievements.~~

(3) The initial evaluation shall incorporate benchmarks and analysis of the best available data to assess annual achievement.

(b) On September 30, 2014, the independent evaluator shall submit to the Council, the State Board of Education, and the Mayor a 5-year assessment of the public education system established by this chapter, which shall include:

~~(B) For the 2008 evaluation, for which benchmarks would not have been submitted in the prior year, the annual achievements shall be measured using existing, reliable data and that data shall be included, or an abstract thereof, in the evaluation.~~

~~(b) On September 15, 2012, in lieu of the annual evaluation required by subsection (a) of this section, the Mayor shall submit to the Council a 5-year assessment of the public education system established by this act, which shall include:~~

~~(1) A comprehensive evaluation of public education following the passage of~~

~~this act; and~~

~~(2) A determination as to whether sufficient progress in public education has been achieved to warrant continuation of the provisions and requirements of this act or whether a new law, and a new system of education, should be enacted by the District government.~~

~~(c)(1) The evaluations required by this section shall be conducted by the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences ("NRC") for the 5-year period described in this section, an independent evaluator that shall be recommended by the Mayor and submitted to the Council for approval by September 15, 2007, for a 30-day review period.~~

~~(2) By December 31, 2009, prior to conducting the initial evaluation, NRC shall submit to the Council and the Mayor a compilation of data and an analysis plan, which shows: If the Council does not approve or disapprove the recommendation, by resolution, within the 30-day review period, the recommendation shall be deemed disapproved.~~

~~(A) A description of the procedures and method to be used to conduct the evaluation;~~

~~(B) The opportunities for public involvement;~~

~~(C) The estimated release dates of interim and final evaluation reports; and~~

~~(D) A revised budget and funding plan for the evaluation.~~

~~(2)~~

~~(3) The evaluations required by this section may be conducted by the same independent evaluator for 5 consecutive years.~~

~~(4)(3) For the purposes of this subsection, the term "independent evaluator" means an individual or entity that has neither a current contractual or employment relationship with the District government.~~

(d) The Office of the Chief Financial Officer shall transfer by October 5, 2009, an amount of \$325,000 in local funds through an intra-District transfer from DCPS to the Office of the District of Columbia Auditor to contract with NRC to conduct the initial evaluation required by this section.

TITLE III. STATE EDUCATION AGENCY FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Sec. 301. Short title.

This title may be cited as the "Public Education State-Level Functions and State Education Agency Functions and Responsibilities Designation Amendment Act of 2007".

Sec. 302. The State Education Office Establishment Act of 2000, effective October 21, 2000 (D.C. Law 13-176; D.C. Official Code § 38-2601 *et seq.*), is amended as follows:

(a) Section 2 (D.C. Official Code § 38-2601) is amended to read as follows:

(1) Subsection (a) is amended by striking the phrase "a State Education Office ("SEO")" and inserting the phrase "an Office of the State Superintendent of Education ("OSSE")" in its place.

(2) Subsection (b) is amended as follows:

(A) Strike the acronym "SEO" and insert the acronym "OSSE" in its place.

(B) Strike the phrase "State Education Officer ("Officer")" and insert the phrase "State Superintendent of Education ("State Superintendent")" in its place.

(3) New subsections (c) and (d) are added to read as follows:

“(c) The State Superintendent shall serve as the chief state school officer for the District of Columbia and shall represent the OSSE and the District of Columbia in all matters before the United States Department of Education and with other states and educational organizations.

“(d) All operational authority for state-level functions, except that delegated to the State Board of Education in section 403 of the Public Education Reform Amendment Act of 2007, passed on 2<sup>nd</sup> reading on April 19, 2007 (Enrolled version of Bill 17-1), shall vest in the Office of the State Superintendent of Education under the supervision of the State Superintendent of Education.”.

(b) A new section 2a is added to read as follows: "Sec. 2a.

Duties.

“The Office of the State Superintendent of Education shall serve as the state education agency and perform the functions of a state education agency for the District of Columbia under applicable federal law, including grant-making, oversight, and state educational agency functions for standards, assessments, and federal accountability requirements for elementary and secondary education.”.

(c) Section 3(b) (D.C. Official Code § 38-2602(b)) is amended as follows:

(1) Paragraph (5) is amended by striking the word "and" at the end.

(2) Paragraph (6) is amended by striking the period at the end and inserting a semicolon in its place.

(3) New paragraphs (7), (8), (9), (10), (11), (12), (13), (14), and (15) are added to read as follows:

“(7) Issue rules to establish requirements to govern acceptable credit to be granted for studies completed at independent, private, public, public charter schools, and private instruction;

“(8) Prescribe minimum amounts of instructional time for all schools, including public, public charter, and private schools;

(8A) Prescribe standards for extended learning time beyond the regular school day for public schools, including public charter schools

“(9) Oversee the state-level functions and activities related to early childhood

education programs, including the public education of the Early Intervention Services Program, in accordance with section 502 of the Child and Youth, Safety and Health Omnibus Amendment Act of 2004, effective April 13, 2005 (D.C. Law 15-353; D.C. Official Code § 7-863.02);

(9A) Administer pre-kindergarten education, in accordance with § 38-271.02;

(9B) Conduct a residency audit, annually, to establish the number of in-District and out-of-District children enrolled in pre-kindergarten pursuant to Chapter 2A of this title [§ 38-271.01 et seq.];

“(10) Provide for the education of children in the custody of the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services;

“(11) Formulate and promulgate rules necessary to carry out its functions, including rules governing the process for review and approval of state-level policies by the State Board of Education under section 403 of the Public Education Reform Amendment Act of 2007, pursuant to the District of Columbia Administrative Procedure Act, approved October 21, 1968, (82 Stat. 1204; D.C. Official Code § 2-501 *et seq.*)

“(12) Develop and adopt policies that come within the functions of state educational agencies under federal law, subject to the approval of the State Board of Education for those policies that are subject to board approval under section 403 of the Public Education Reform Amendment Act of 2007;

“(13) Conduct studies and pilot projects to develop, review, or test state policy; ~~“(14) Provide staff support to the State Board of Education to enable it to perform its functions as enumerated in section 403 of the Public Education Reform Amendment Act of 2007; and~~

“(15) Fulfill any other responsibilities consistent with the performance of the state-level education functions of the District of Columbia.”

(16) Promulgate rules for the administration and implementation of the uniform per student funding formula, pursuant to Chapter 29 of this title;

(17) Have the authority to collect and dedicate fees for state academic credential certifications and general educational development testing as well as for any other state-level education function, as established by the Superintendent by regulation;

(18) Have the authority to issue grants, from funds under its administration (including the non-public tuition paper agency), to local education agencies ("LEAs") for programs that increase the capacity of the LEA to provide special education services;

(19) By August 1, 2013, create a truancy prevention resource guide for parents and legal guardians who have children who attend a District public school, which shall be updated and made available upon request and, at minimum, include:

(A) An explanation of the District's laws and regulations related to absenteeism and truancy;

(B) Information on:

(i) What a parent or legal guardian can do to prevent truancy;

(ii) The common causes of truancy; and

(iii) Common consequences of truancy;

(C) A comprehensive list of resources that are available to a parent or legal guardian, and the student, that address the common causes of truancy and the prevention of it, such as:

(i) Hotlines that provide assistance to parents, legal guardians, and youth;

(ii) Counseling for the parent (or legal guardian) or the youth, or both;

(iii) Parenting classes;

(iv) Parent-support groups;

(v) Family psycho-education programs;

(vi) Parent-resource libraries;

- (vii) Risk prevention education;
- (viii) Neighborhood family support organizations and collaboratives that provide assistance to families experiencing hardship;
- (ix) Behavioral health resources and programs in schools;
- (x) The Behavioral Health Ombudsman Program; and
- (xi) The resources at each public school for at-risk students and their parents or legal guardians;
- (20) (A) Oversee the functions and activities, as required, of Chapter 7C of this title [§ 38-771.01 et seq.], including ensuring the integrity and security of Districtwide assessments administered by a local education agency;
  - (B) Establish standards to obtain and securely maintain and distribute test materials, which shall at minimum require that:
    - (i) An inventory of all test materials be maintained;
    - (ii) All test materials be secured under lock and key;
    - (iii) Only authorized personnel have access to test materials; and
    - (iv) All authorized personnel sign a test integrity and security agreement before being able to access test materials or assist in the administration of a Districtwide assessment;
  - (C) Require each LEA to maintain and submit to OSSE at least 90 days before the administration of a Districtwide assessment a test security plan that at minimum includes:
    - (i) Procedures for the secure maintenance, dissemination, collection, and storage of Districtwide assessment materials before, during, and after administering a test, including:
      - (I) Keeping an inventory of all materials and identifying individuals with access to the materials;
      - (II) Accounting for and reporting to the OSSE any materials that are lost or otherwise unaccounted; and
      - (III) Accounting for and securing old or damaged materials;
    - (ii) The name and contact information for the test integrity coordinator and the test monitors at each school under the LEA's control;
    - (iii) A list of actions prohibited by authorized personnel;
    - (iv) Procedures pursuant to which students, authorized personnel, and other individuals may, and are encouraged to, report irregularities in testing administration or testing security; and
    - (v) Written procedures for investigating and remediating any complaint, allegation, or concern about a potential failure of testing integrity and security;
  - (D) Approve an LEA's test security plan and make recommendations to amend the plan when necessary;
  - (E) Keep a copy of each LEA's test security plan on file, which shall be made available to a member of the public upon request;
  - (F) Establish a standard for monitoring the administration of Districtwide assessments to ensure compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies;
  - (G) Monitor Districtwide assessment administration procedures in randomly selected schools and in targeted schools to ensure adherence to all applicable laws, regulations, and policies, which may occur one week before the administration of a Districtwide assessment and during the administration of a Districtwide assessment;
  - (H) Establish a process by which to ensure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations for the administration of Districtwide assessments for LEA students at nonpublic schools;
    - (I) Develop and distribute a testing integrity and security agreement to be signed by authorized personnel;
    - (J) Develop standards to train authorized personnel on testing integrity and security and require the authorized personnel to acknowledge in writing that he or she completed the training;

- (K) Provide technical assistance to LEAs regarding testing integrity and security procedures;
- (L) Establish standards for the investigation of any alleged violation of an applicable law, regulation, or policy relating to testing integrity and security, which standards shall:
- (i) Identify the circumstances that trigger an investigation;
- (ii) Require the initiation of an investigation even if only one circumstance is present; provided, that there appears to be egregious noncompliance; and
- (iii) Require the investigation of any report of a violation of the laws, regulations, and policies relating to testing integrity and security;
- (M) Cooperate with any investigation initiated by the Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia or the U.S. Attorney's Office; and
- (N) Revoke, for a period of at least one year, any OSSE granted certification or license granted to an individual who is found to have knowingly and willfully violated, assisted in the violation of, solicited another to violate or assist in the violation of, or failed to report a violation of this paragraph, regulations issued pursuant to this paragraph, other applicable law, or other test integrity policy or procedure.
- (O) For the purposes of this paragraph, the term:
- (i) "Authorized personnel" means any individual who has access to Districtwide assessment materials or is directly involved in the administration of a Districtwide assessment.
- (ii) "Districtwide assessments" shall have the same meaning as provided in § 38-1800.02(13).
- (iii) "Local education agency" or "LEA" means the District of Columbia Public Schools system or any individual or group of public charter schools operating under a single charter.
- (iv) "Test integrity coordinator" means an individual designated by a LEA to be responsible for testing integrity and security for the LEA in its entirety during the administration of a Districtwide assessment.
- (v) "Testing integrity and security agreement" means an agreement developed by OSSE that:
- (I) Sets forth requirements for ensuring the integrity of Districtwide assessments pursuant to District law and regulation; and
- (II) Requires the signatory to acknowledge that he or she understands that knowingly and willingly violating a District law, regulation, or a test security plan could result in civil liability, including the loss of an OSSE granted certification or license.
- (vi) "Test monitor" means an individual designated by a LEA to be responsible for testing integrity and security at each individual school subject to the LEA's control during the administration of a Districtwide assessment; and
- (21) Implement and administer the CTE grant program established by § 38-2611 and administer the CTE Grant Program Fund established by § 38-2612.
- (c) (1) There is established as a nonlapsing fund the Academic Certification and Testing Fund ("Fund"). All fees collected by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education for state academic credential certifications, general educational development testing, or any other state-level education function established pursuant to subsection (b)(17) of this section shall be deposited into the Fund.
- (2) All funds deposited into the Fund, and any interest earned on those funds, shall be used for the purposes set forth in paragraph (3) of this subsection. Any unexpended funds in the Academic Certification and Testing Fund at the end of a fiscal year shall revert to the unrestricted fund balance of the General Fund of the District of Columbia.
- (3) The Fund shall be administered by the State Superintendent of Education and shall be used to support the administration of state academic credential certifications, General Educational Development, and other state-level programs.
- (d) A new section 3a is added to read as follows:  
 "Sec. 3a. Transfer of state-level functions from the Board of Education.  
 "(a) All positions, personnel, property, records, and unexpended balances of appropriations,

allocations, and other funds available or to be made available to the District of Columbia Board of Education that support state-level functions related to state education agency responsibilities and all powers, duties, and functions delegated to the District of Columbia Board of Education concerning the establishment, development, and institution of state-level functions related to state education agency responsibilities identified in section 3 are transferred to the Office of the State Superintendent of Education.

"(b) The transfer described in subsection (a) of this section shall be in accordance with section 7."

"(e) A new section 6a is added to read as follows:

"Sec. 6a. Transition plan for transfer of state-level functions.

"(a) Within 90 days of the effective date of Title III of the Public Education Reform Amendment Act of 2007 ("Title III"), the Office of the State Superintendent of Education shall submit to the Mayor for approval a detailed transition plan, in accordance with section 7, for implementation of the transfers set forth in Title III, which shall begin within 30 days of approval; provided, that prior to completion and submission of the plan, the Mayor shall give notice of the contemplated action and an opportunity for a hearing for public comment on the plan, which shall:

"(1) Be formulated in consultation with the Board of Education, the District of Columbia Public Schools, the Public Charter School Board, the Washington Teachers Union, and with any relevant District and federal agencies;

"(2) Identify the authority and responsibility of each entity at each stage in the transition process;

"(3) Specify time lines, dates, and benchmarks for completion of the transfer; function; and

"(4) Provide an estimate of the cost to the OSSE of carrying out each transferred

"(5) Identify any factors with potential for disrupting services to students and recommend steps to prevent any possible disruption.

"(b) The Mayor shall forward the approved transition plan to the Council and the State Board of Education for review"

(f) Section 7a(a) (D.C. Official Code § 38-2607(a)) is amended by striking the phrase "State Education Office" and inserting the phrase "Office of the State Superintendent of Education" in its place.

(g) A new section 7b is added to read as follows:

"Sec. 7b. Supervision of adult education program.

"(a) The OSSE shall be the state agency responsible for supervision of adult education and adult literacy.

"(b) All positions, personnel, property, records, and unexpended balances of appropriations, allocations, and other funds available or to be made available to the University of the District of Columbia that support state-level functions related to adult education or adult literacy and all of the powers, duties, and functions delegated to the University of the District of Columbia concerning the establishment, development, and institution of state-level functions related to adult education or adult literacy are transferred to the OSSE.

"(c) The transfer described in subsection (b) of this section shall be in accordance with section 7.

"(d) The Office of the State Superintendent of Education shall apply for federal funds as provided in the Adult Education Act, approved April 28, 1988 (102 Stat. 302; 20 U.S.C. § 1201 *et seq.*).

"(e)(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the OSSE is authorized to establish

fee rates for all adult education courses. The amount to be charged to each adult shall be fixed annually by the OSSE, which shall be the amount necessary to cover the expense of instruction, cost of textbooks and school supplies, and other operating costs associated with each course offered; provided, that the amount fixed is in accordance with section 6 of the District of Columbia Administrative Procedure Act, approved October 21, 1968 (82 Stat. 1204; D.C. Official Code § 2-505). Following the adoption of the fee rates, the OSSE shall transmit a copy of the fee schedule to the Mayor and the Council.

"(2) All amounts received by the OSSE pursuant to this subsection shall be paid to the District of Columbia Treasurer and deposited in the General Fund of the District of Columbia in a segregated account to be available as a revenue source for the OSSE to fund select adult education courses for which fees will be charged.

"(3) Waivers, in whole or in part, of fees for select adult education courses may be granted by the OSSE."

Sec. 303. Section 212 of the Adult Education Designation Amendment Act of 1998, effective April 20, 1999 (D.C. Law 12-231; D.C. Official Code § 38-1202.12), is repealed.

Sec. 304. The Early Intervention Program Establishment Act of 2004, effective April 13, 2005 (D.C. Law 15-353; D.C. Official Code § 7-863.01 *et seq.*), is amended as follows:

(a) Section 503(a) (D.C. Official Code § 7-863.03(a)) is amended by striking the phrase "families. The Program will be administered and supervised by a lead agency designated by the

Mayor." and inserting the phrase "families, which shall be an office of and administered by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education." in its place.

(b) A new section 503a is added to read as follows:

"Sec. 503a. Transfer from Department of Human Services; continuation. "(a) All positions, personnel, property, records, and unexpended balances of appropriations, allocations, and other funds available or to be made available to the Department of Human Services that support functions related to the responsibilities of the Early Care and Education Administration and the Early Intervention Program and all of the powers, duties, and functions delegated to the Department of Human Services concerning the establishment, development, and institution of functions related to the Early Intervention Program are transferred to the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, established by section 2 of the State Education Office Establishment Act of 2000, effective October 21, 2000 (D.C. Law 13-176; D.C. Official Code § 38-2601) ("OSSE Act"). The transfer shall be implemented in accordance with the transition plan required by section 6a of the OSSE Act.

"(b) All rules, orders, obligations, determinations, grants, contracts, licenses, and agreements of the Board of Education, the District of Columbia Public Schools, the Department of Human Services, or the University of the District of Columbia relating to functions transferred to the Office of the State Superintendent of Education under subsection (a) of this section shall remain in effect according to their terms until lawfully amended, repealed, or modified."

Sec. 305. Applicability.

This title shall apply upon Congressional enactment of Title IX and inclusion of its effect in an approved budget and financial plan.

#### TITLE IV. ESTABLISHMENT OF STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

Sec. 401. Short title.

This title may be cited as the “State Board of Education Establishment Act of 2007”.

Sec. 402. State Board of Education; establishment; membership.

(a)(1) There is established a State Board of Education (“Board”) consisting of 9 members. Four members shall be appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Council. Five members shall be elected. Four of the 5 elected members shall be elected from the 4 school districts created pursuant to subsection (c) of this section. One member shall be elected at-large as the President of the Board.

(2) Upon enactment of Title IX, the members of the Board of Education established pursuant to section 495 of the Home Rule Act shall serve as the initial State Board of Education established by this title until noon, January 2, 2009.

(b) Beginning at 12:01 p.m. on January 2, 2009, the Board shall consist of 9 elected members. One member shall be elected from each of the 8 school election wards created pursuant to section 2 of the Boundaries Act of 1975, effective December 16, 1975 (D.C. Law 1-38; D.C. Official Code § 1-1011.01), and one member shall be elected at-large. The Board shall select its president from among the 9 members of the Board.

(c) The 4 school districts for the election of Board members, as described in subsection (a)(1) of this section, shall be comprised of the 8 election wards created pursuant to section 2 of the Boundaries Act of 1975, effective December 16, 1975 (D.C. Law 1-38; D.C. Official Code § 1-1011.01), as follows:

- (1) Wards 1 and 2 shall comprise School District I;
- (2) Wards 3 and 4 shall comprise School District II;
- (3) Wards 5 and 6 shall comprise School District III; and
- (4) Wards 7 and 8 shall comprise School District IV.

(d)(1) Except as provided in paragraph (3)(B) of this subsection, the term of office of a member of the Board, including the at-large member, shall be 4 years.

(2) Members may receive compensation at a rate fixed by the Council, which shall not exceed the amount provided for in section 1110 of the District of Columbia Government Comprehensive Merit Personnel Act of 1978, approved March 3, 1979 (D.C. Law 2-139; D.C. Official Code § 1-611.10).

(3)(A) The term of office of a member elected in a general election shall commence at 12:01 p.m. on January 2 of the year following the election. The term of office of an incumbent member shall expire at noon, January 2 of the year following the general election.

(B) The initial terms of the members of the Board elected in the general election in November 2008 shall be as follows:

(i) The 4 members elected from Wards 1, 3, 5, and 6 shall serve 2-year terms, ending at noon, January 2, 2011.

(ii) The 4 members elected from Wards 2, 4, 7, and 8 and the member elected at-large shall serve 4-year terms, ending at noon, January 2, 2013.

(e)(1) Each member of the Board, including the at-large member, shall:

(A) Be a qualified elector, as that term is defined in section 2 of the District of Columbia Election Code of 1955, approved August 12, 1955 (69 Stat. 699; D.C. Official Code § 1-1001.02), in the school election ward from which he seeks election;

(B) Have resided in the ward from which he or she is nominated for one year immediately preceding the election;

(C) Not hold another elective office, other than delegate or alternate delegate to a convention of a political party nominating candidates for President and Vice-President of the United States; or

(D) Not be an officer or employee of the District of Columbia government or of the Board.

(2) A member shall forfeit his or her office upon failure to maintain the requirements of this subsection.

(f) The election of the members of the Board shall be conducted on a nonpartisan basis and in accordance with the District of Columbia Election Code of 1955, approved August 12, 1955 (69 Stat. 699; D.C. Official Code § 1-1001.01 *et seq.*) (“Election Code Act”).

(g) If a member of the Board dies, resigns, or otherwise becomes unable to serve or a member-elect fails to take office, the vacancy shall be filled as provided in section 10(e) and (g) of the Election Code Act.

#### Sec. 403. Functions of the Board.

(a) The Board shall:

(1) Advise the State Superintendent of Education on educational matters,

including:

(A) State standards;

(B) State policies, including those governing special, academic, vocational, charter, and other schools;

(C) State objectives; and

(D) State regulations proposed by the Mayor or the State Superintendent of Education;

(1A) Oversee the Office of Ombudsman for Public Education in accordance with Chapter 3A of this title [§ 38-351 *et seq.*], and the Office of the Student Advocate in accordance with Chapter 3B of this title [§ 38-371 *et seq.*].

(2) Approve state academic standards, following a recommendation by the State Superintendent of Education, ensuring that the standards recommended by the State Superintendent of Education:

(A) Specify what children are expected to know and be able to do;

(B) Contain coherent and rigorous content;

(C) Encourage the teaching of advanced skills; and

(D) Are updated on a regular basis;

(3) Approve high school graduation requirements;

(4) Approve standards for high school equivalence credentials;

(5) Approve a state definition of:

(A) "Adequate yearly progress" that will be applied consistently to all local education agencies;

(B) And standards for "highly qualified teachers," pursuant to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, approved January 8, 2002 (115 Stat. 1425; 20 U.S.C. § 6301 *et seq.*) (“NCLB Act”); and

(C) "Proficiency" that ensures an accurate measure of student achievement;

(6) Approve standards for accreditation and certification of teacher preparation programs of colleges and universities;

(7) Approve the state accountability plan for the District of Columbia developed by the chief state school officer, pursuant to the NCLB Act, ensuring that:

(A) The plan includes a single statewide accountability system that will ensure all local education agencies make adequate yearly progress; and

(B) The statewide accountability system included in the plan is based on academic standards, academic assessments, a standardized system of accountability across all local education agencies, and a system of sanctions and rewards that will be used to hold local education agencies accountable for student achievement;

(8) Approve state policies for parental involvement;

(9) Approve state policies for supplemental education service providers operating in the

District to ensure that providers have a demonstrated record of effectiveness and offer services that promote challenging academic achievement standards and that improve student achievement;

- (10) Approve the rules for residency verification;
  - (11) Approve the list of charter school accreditation organizations;
  - (12) Approve the categories and format of the annual report card, pursuant to NCLB Act;
  - (13) Approve the list of private placement accreditation organizations, pursuant to the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula for Public Schools and Public Charter Schools and Tax Conformity Clarification Amendment Act of 1998, effective March 26, 1999 (D.C. Law 12-207; D.C. Official Code § 38-2901 *et seq.*);
  - (14) Approve state rules for enforcing school attendance requirements; and
  - (15) Approve state standards for home schooling.
- (b) The Board shall conduct monthly meetings to receive citizen input with respect to issues properly before it, which may be conducted at a location in a ward.

(c) The Board shall consider matters for policy approval upon submission of a request for policy action by the State Superintendent of Education within a review period requested by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education.

(d) (1) The Mayor Board shall, by order, specify the Board's its organizational structure, staff, budget, operations, reimbursement of expenses policy, and other matters affecting the Board's functions.

(2) The Board shall appoint staff members, who shall serve at the pleasure of the Board, to perform administrative functions and any other functions necessary to execute the mission of the Board.

(3) Beginning in fiscal year 2013, the Board shall prepare and submit to the Mayor, for inclusion in the annual budget prepared and submitted to the Council pursuant to part D of subchapter IV of Chapter 2 of Title 1 [§ 204.41 et seq.], annual estimates of the expenditures and appropriations necessary for the operation of the Board for the year. All the estimates shall be forwarded by the Mayor to the Council for, in addition to the Mayor's recommendations, action by the Council pursuant to §§ 1-204.46 and 1-206.03(c).

(4) The Board shall be reflected in the budget and financial system as an agency-level entity.

(5) All assets, staff, and unexpended appropriations of the Office of the State Superintendent of Education or of any other agency that are associated with the Board shall be transferred to the Board by April 1, 2013.

(4)

(e) For the purposes of this section, the term "state" means District-wide and similar to functions, policies, and rules performed by states on a state-wide basis.

Sec. 404. Applicability.

This title shall apply upon Congressional enactment of Title IX.

#### TITLE V. INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION AND SERVICES INTEGRATION COMMISSION

Sec. 501. Short title.

This title may be cited as the "Interagency Collaboration and Services Integration Commission Establishment Act of 2007".

Sec. 502. Definitions.

For the purposes of this title, the term:

- (1) "Commission" means the Interagency Collaboration and Services Integration Commission established by section 504.
- (2) "Comprehensive, multi-disciplinary assessment" means an assessment of children to determine the extent to which they are affected by risk and protective factors as individuals and as members of families, communities, and schools, and the extent to which they have service needs resulting from emotional disturbance, substance abuse, exposure to violence, or learning disabilities.
- (3) "Evidence-based program" means a program that:
- (A) Has been affirmatively evaluated by an independent agency with demonstrated expertise in evaluation;
  - (B) Demonstrates effectiveness in accomplishing its intended purposes and yields statistically significant supporting data; and
  - (C) Has been replicated in other communities with a level of effectiveness comparable to that indicated in the evaluation required by subparagraph (A) of this paragraph;
- (4) "Integrated service plan" means a service plan that promotes delivery of services that are, to the fullest extent possible, comprehensive, implemented without interruption, and free from duplication or redundancy.
- (5) "Risk and protective factors" means a circumstance or set of circumstances that assist in determining whether an individual is at risk of harm, emotional, physical, or otherwise; and
- (6) "School-based clinician" means a healthcare or social-services practitioner, a mental-health professional, or substance abuse counselor certified or licensed in his or her field by the Director of the Department of Health or another nationally recognized professional organization, qualified to conduct comprehensive, multi-disciplinary assessments.

Sec. 503. Purpose.

The purpose of the Commission is to promote a vision of the District of Columbia as a stable, safe, and healthy environment for children, youth, and their families by reducing juvenile and family violence and promoting social and emotional skills among children, youth, and their families through the oversight of a comprehensive, community-based integrated service delivery system aligned with the statewide strategic education and youth development plan, described in § 38-191, that includes: address the needs of at-risk children by reducing juvenile and family violence and promoting social and emotional skills among children and youth through the oversight of a comprehensive integrated service-delivery system that includes:

- (1) Comprehensive, multi-disciplinary assessments of children by school-based
- (2) Authority over a management information system that enables the inter-agency exchange of information and protects families' privacy rights;
- (3) Facilitation of resource sharing and inter-agency collaboration on multi-disciplinary projects;
- (4) Development and implementation of proven, evidence-based preventive and interventive programs for children and families by educational, law enforcement, mental health, and social services agencies;
- (5) Development of integrated service plans for individual children and families that promote the delivery of services that are comprehensive, implemented without interruption, and free from duplication or redundancy; and
- (6) Independent evaluation of the effectiveness of the programs developed pursuant to, or in accordance with, this title, including:
  - (A) Their impact on academic performance, levels of violence by and against children, truancy, and delinquency;
  - (B) The cost effectiveness of the programs, taking into account such factors as

reductions, or potential reductions, in out-of-home placements and law enforcement expenditures; and

(C) The extent to which the Commission has developed the capacity to sustain the programs and activities.

Sec. 504. Commission; establishment; authority.

(a) There is established ~~an Interagency Collaboration and Services Integration Commission; the Statewide Commission on Children, Youth, and their Families.~~

(b) Unless expressly prohibited in law or regulation, the Commission shall have the authority to:

(1) Combine local, federal, and other resources available to the participating education, law enforcement, and human services agencies to provide comprehensive multi-disciplinary assessments, integrated services, and evidence-based programs, as required by this title;

(2) Apply for, receive, and disburse federal, state, and local funds relating to the duties and responsibilities of the Commission;

(3) Utilize the funding provided pursuant to the Integrated Funding and Services for At-Risk Children, Youth, and Families Act of 2006, effective March 2, 2007 (D.C. Law 16-192; 53 DCR 6899);

(4) Exercise personnel authority for all employees of the Commission, consistent with the District of Columbia Government Comprehensive Merit Personnel Act of 1978, effective March 3, 1979 (D.C. Law 2-139; D.C. Official Code § 1-601.01 *et seq.*); and

(5) Exercise procurement authority, consistent with the District of Columbia Procurement Practices Act of 1985, effective February 21, 1986 (D.C. Law 6-85; D.C. Official Code § 2-301.01 *et seq.*) ("PPA"); except, that the provisions of section 105(a), (b), (c), and (e) of the PPA shall not apply.

Sec. 505. Duties.

(a) Within 90 days of the applicability of this title, the Commission shall:

(1) Develop an information-sharing agreement that:

(A) Adheres to all applicable provisions of federal and District law and professional standards regarding confidentiality, including Commission procedures and protocols for safeguarding confidential and other child-related information;

(B) Uses a form created by the Commission for obtaining consent to assessment and disclosure of confidential information from a participant or the parent or legal guardian of the participant to education, law enforcement, and human service agencies; and

(C) Permits Commission personnel to collect information from agencies participating in the agreement to facilitate comprehensive multi-disciplinary assessments and the development and implementation of integrated service plans;

(2) Develop procedures and protocols for safeguarding confidential and other participant-related information, documents, files, electronic communications, and computer data, including:

(A) Procedures for determining when a fully informed and written consent to assessment and disclosure of confidential information is provided by a participant or the parent or legal guardian of the participant; and

(B) The circumstances and manner in which confidential information collected and maintained by designated personnel of the Commission may be disclosed, as permitted by applicable provisions of local and federal law, to:

(I) Other personnel of the Commission for the exclusive purposes of conducting comprehensive, multi-disciplinary assessments of children or creating and implementing

integrated service plans for children; and

(ii) Education, law enforcement, human service agencies, or other service providers identified in the disclosure consent for the exclusive purpose of creating and implementing integrated service plans; and

(3) Identify a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary assessment instrument that shall be used by school-based clinicians to:

(A) Determine the extent to which children are affected by risk and protective factors as individuals and as members of families, communities, and schools;

(B) Determine the extent to which children have service needs resulting from emotional disturbance, substance abuse, exposure to violence, or learning disabilities;

(C) Provide therapeutic interventions; and

(D) Assist in the development of integrated service plans;

(b)(1) All programs shall be evidence-based, age-appropriate, and implemented to serve children and their families and shall include:

(A) Early childhood psycho-social and emotional development assistance

(B) School-based violence and substance abuse prevention;

(C) Social and emotional learning assistance;

(D) Family resiliency and strengthening assistance; and

(E) Services that are designed to reduce local reliance on out-of-home placement of children under the age of 18.

(2) The Commission shall determine the extent to which the District has preventive and early interventive evidence-based programs that already meet some or all of the requirements of paragraph (1) of this subsection and assist education, law enforcement, and human service agencies in the implementation of needed preventive and early interventive programs for children and their families.

(c) The Commission shall:

(1) Have authority over an interagency database housed in a secure location to store assessment information, data gathered pursuant to the information-sharing agreement described in subsection (a) of this section, and any other data relevant to service integration and the ongoing assessment of programs implemented or supported by the Commission;

(2) Conduct an annual independent evaluation of the effectiveness of the programs supported, facilitated, or overseen by the Commission, including:

(A) The impact on academic performance, levels of violence by and against children, truancy, and delinquency; and

(B) The cost effectiveness of the programs, taking into account such factors as reductions, or potential reductions, in out-of-home placements and in law enforcement expenditures, and the extent to which the Commission's member agencies have developed the capacity to sustain the programs and activities; and

(3)(A) Report, on an annual basis, within 90 days after the end of the fiscal year, to the Mayor and the Council on the status and progress of the objectives of the Commission, including [a description of activities, alignment with the statewide education and youth development framework and strategic plan, and](#) the results of the evaluation required by paragraph (2) of this subsection and any recommendations made by the Commission to the public, the Mayor, or the Council.

(B) In calendar year 2012, the evaluation required by paragraph (2) of this subsection shall also be included in the assessment required by section 204(b).

(4) [The Commission shall consult with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education to ensure that eligible families can access comprehensive and coordinated services for their children of pre-k age, as that term is defined in § 38-271.01\(7\);](#)

(5) Develop goals and determine priorities for children, youth, and their families, based on established annual benchmarks and goals that are reported as part of the Deputy Mayor for Education's agency performance measures;

(6) Meet at least 4 times a year; and

(7) Make available on the Deputy Mayor for Education's website:

(A) An updated list and description of ongoing initiatives and subcommittees of the Commission;

(B) An agenda of topics to be discussed, along with all supporting documentation, which shall also be distributed to the members of the Commission at least 48 hours in advance of a Commission meeting, which includes:

(i) The relevant action steps;

(ii) An implementation status report; and

(iii) Any other data relevant to the Commission's meeting; and

(C) Within 2 weeks of each Commission meeting, the minutes of, and action steps determined at, the meeting.

#### Sec. 506. Membership.

(a) The Commission shall include the:

- (1) Mayor, who shall serve as Chair;
- (2) Chairman of Council of the District of Columbia;
- (3) Chair of the Committee on Human Services;
- (4) Chief Judge, Family Court, Superior Court of the District of Columbia;
- (5) Deputy Mayor for Education;
- (6) City Administrator;
- (7) State Superintendent of Education;
- (8) Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools;
- (9) Chair of the Public Charter School Board;
- (10) Director of the Department of Human Services;
- (11) Director of the Child and Family Services Agency;
- (12) Director of the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services;
- (13) Director of the Department of Corrections;
- (14) Director of the Department of Health;
- (15) Director of the Department of Mental Health;
- (16) Chief of the Metropolitan Police Department;
- (17) Director of the Court Social Services Agency;
- (18) Attorney General for the District of Columbia;
- (19) Director of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council;
- (20) Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation; and
- (21) Director of the District of Columbia Public Library.

(22) Executive Director of the Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation;

(23) President of the State Board of Education; and

(24) (24) In consultation with youth service advocates and organizations throughout the community, 5 members from the community, appointed by the Mayor, in accordance with subsection (c) of this section.

(b) The Mayor, by order, may appoint additional members to the Commission, as necessary.

(c) (1) The members of the community appointed pursuant to subsection (a)(24) of this section shall include:

- (A) A local funder of youth service and development activities;
  - (B) A representative of the early childhood education community;
  - (C) A representative of the youth service provider community;
  - (D) A representative from the post-secondary preparedness community; and
  - (E) An expert on primary and secondary education policy.
- (2) Members of the community appointed pursuant to subsection (a)(24) of this section may be rotated or changed based upon the agenda for each Commission meeting.

Sec. 507. Administrative support.

The Commission may hire staff and obtain equipment, supplies, materials, and services necessary to carry out the functions of the Commission.

Sec. 508. Applicability.

This title shall apply upon Congressional enactment of Title IX, 2007”.

TITLE VI. EDUCATION OMBUDSMAN

Sec. 601. Short title.

This title may be cited as the “Ombudsman for Public Education Establishment Act of Sec. 602. Office of Ombudsman; establishment; term.

(a)(1) There is established within the Department of Education an Office of Ombudsman for Public Education (“Office of Ombudsman”), which shall be headed by an Ombudsman appointed by ~~the Mayor and confirmed by the Council in accordance with paragraph (2) of this subsection~~ the State Board of Education.

(b)(1) The Ombudsman shall be a District resident within 180 days of appointment.

(2) The Ombudsman shall serve for a term of 5 years, and may be reappointed.

(3) After notice and an opportunity to be heard, the Ombudsman may be removed only for cause that relates to the Ombudsman's character or efficiency by a majority vote of the State Board of Education.

(2) The Mayor shall submit a nomination for Ombudsman to the Council for a 45-day period of review, excluding days of Council recess. If the Council does not approve or disapprove the nomination, by resolution, within this 45-day review period, the nomination shall be deemed approved.

(b) (c) If a vacancy in the position of Ombudsman occurs as a consequence of resignation, disability, death, or other reason other than expiration of term, the Mayor State Board of Education shall appoint a replacement to fill the unexpired term within 75 days of the occurrence of the vacancy, in the same manner as provided in subsection (a) of this section; provided, that the Mayor shall submit the nomination to the Council within 30 days after the occurrence of the vacancy.

(e) The Ombudsman shall serve for a term of 3 years, and may be reappointed.

(d) The purpose of the Ombudsman is to serve as a neutral resource for current and prospective public school students and their parents or guardians in the resolution of complaints and concerns regarding public education.

(e) For the purposes of this chapter, the term “public school” means District of Columbia Public Schools and public charter schools in the District of Columbia.

Sec. 603. Qualifications. The Ombudsman shall:

- (1) Be appointed without regard to party affiliation;
- (2) Be appointed on the basis of integrity;
- (3) Possess a demonstrated ability to analyze issues and matters of law, administration, and policy;
- (4) Possess experience in the field of social work, counseling, mediation, law, policy, or public administration or auditing, accounting, or other investigative field; and
- (5) Have management experience that demonstrates an ability to hire and supervise qualified staff.

Sec. 604. Duties.

(a) The Ombudsman shall:

- (1) Provide outreach to current and prospective public school students residents and their parents or guardians, and to further this purpose, have the cooperation of all individuals within the public school system;
- (2) Encourage communication between public schools and current and prospective public school students and their parents or guardians regarding public education residents and the Mayor regarding all levels of public education;
- (3) Serve as a vehicle for citizens- current and prospective public school students and their parents or guardians to communicate their complaints and concerns regarding public education through a single office;
- (4) Respond to complaints and concerns in a timely fashion with accurate and helpful information;
- (5) Receive complaints and concerns from current and prospective public school students and their parents or guardians parents, students, teachers, and other District residents concerning public education, including personnel actions, policies, and procedures;
- (6) Determine the validity of any complaint quickly and professionally;
- (7) Examine and address valid complaints and concerns;
- (8) Generate options for a response, and offer a recommendation among the
- (9) Make a referral to the pertinent school official, when appropriate; Refer complainants to a public school official, agency, department, or resource, when appropriate;
- (10) Except when the parties are involved in legal or administrative proceedings, resolve complaints presented by current and prospective public school students and their parents or guardians, either through complaint resolution services as established pursuant to § 38-356 or through other informal measures; Identify systemic concerns raised by citizens, or otherwise received, related  
(10) to public education;
- (10)(11) Develop and Maintain a database that tracks complaints and concerns, identified by grade level and by the public school, received according to various categories, including school level and location; and the resolution of such complaints and concerns.
- (11)(12) Submit to the Deputy Mayor for Public Education and the Chairman of the Council, on a monthly basis, an analysis of the preceding month, including complaint and resolution data;  
Repealed
- (12)(13) Identify systemic concerns and Recommend to the State Board of Education policy changes, staff training, and strategies to improve the delivery of public education; and services;
- (13)(14) Systemically track complaints and concerns, and periodically analyze the data and report to the Deputy Mayor for Education patterns of complaints and concerns that suggest a

~~need for a policy change, staff training, or the implementation of strategic action to address an issue; and Repealed~~

~~(14)(15)~~ Within 90 days of the end of each school year, submit to the State Board of Deputy Mayor for Education and make publicly available, a report analyzing summarizing the work of the Ombudsman during the previous school year, including an analysis of the types, and number, of:

- (A) Complaints received~~Inquiries;~~
- (B) Complaints and concerns examined and resolved informally;
- (C) Complaints and concerns examined and resolved through a formal process;
- (D) Complaints dismissed as unfounded~~Examinations pending;~~
- (E) Complaints pending; Recommendations made; and
- (F) Recommendations made; that were followed, to the extent that it can be determined
- ~~(F)(G)~~ Recommendations that were followed, to the extent that it can be determined

Sec. 605. Authority. The Ombudsman shall:

- (1) Have access to books, records, files, reports, findings, and all other papers, items, or property belonging to or in use by all departments, agencies, instrumentalities, and employees of District of Columbia Public Schools ("DCPS") necessary to facilitate the purpose of this title, excluding the Executive Office of the Mayor, the Council, and the District of Columbia courts;
- (2) Have full access to student educational records as allowed by federal and local law;
- (3) Speak in regard to educational issues under the purview of the Office of Ombudsman with any official or employee within the public school system without the permission of the individual's supervisor;
- (4) Examine an act or failure to act of any official or employee within the public school system;
- (5) Determine which complaints and concerns warrant further examination;
- (6) Examine any matter under the purview of the Office of Ombudsman absent a complaint;
- (7) Forward to the Office of the Inspector General all complaints and concerns that require an audit or investigation of a school or a program, agency, or department within DCPS that falls within the purview of the Office of the Inspector General; and
- (8) Forward to the Deputy Mayor for Education any policy recommendations that the Ombudsman determines would be helpful to prevent and detect corruption, mismanagement, waste, fraud, and abuse within DCPS.

Sec. 606. Limitations; protections.

(a) The Ombudsman shall not:

- (1) Disclose personally identifiable information regarding a student without the specific written consent of the student or parent, as required by federal and local law;
- (2) Disclose the substance of a conversation with any teacher or other official or employee within the public school system without consent;
- (3) Disclose the identity of any person who brings a complaint or provides information to the Ombudsman without the person's consent, unless the Ombudsman determines that disclosure is unavoidable or necessary to further the ends of an investigation;
- ~~(4)~~ Have the authority to take any personnel action; or
- ~~(4)~~ (4A) Examine or investigate any matter that would be under the jurisdiction of the Office of the Inspector General or the Office of District of Columbia Auditor;
- ~~(5)~~ Examine the Executive Office of Mayor, the Council or its personnel, or the District of Columbia courts or its personnel; or-
- ~~(5)(6)~~ Provide legal advice or legal representation.

(b) The Ombudsman shall not:

(1) Be compelled to testify in a legal or administrative proceeding regarding an Office of Ombudsman examination or to release information gathered during the course of an examination or investigation;

(2) Be held personally liable for the good faith performance of his or her responsibilities under this title, except that no immunity shall extend to criminal acts, or other acts that violate District or federal law; or

(3) Be subject to retaliatory action for the good faith performance of his or her responsibilities under this title.

§ 38–356. Complaint resolution services.

(a) The Office of Ombudsman shall provide complaint resolution services, which shall be available to current and prospective public school students and their parents or guardians.

(b) Participation in complaint resolution services provided by the Office of Ombudsman shall be voluntary.

(c) Before submitting a complaint to the Office of Ombudsman, the complainant shall make reasonable efforts to resolve the issue at the school level.

(d) Complainants may submit complaints by phone, in writing, or electronically.

(e) The Office of Ombudsman shall review and investigate each complaint and shall do one or more of the following:

(1) Resolve the complaint;

(2) Refer the complainant to another agency or department;

(3) Require the complainant to submit documentation to support the complaint;

(4) Provide an opportunity for the complainant to meet with the subject of the complaint;

(5) Conduct mediation proceedings;

(6) Dismiss the complaint as unfounded; or

(7) Take any other action determined necessary and appropriate by the Ombudsman.

Sec. 607. Applicability.

This title shall apply upon Congressional enactment of Title IX.

TITLE VII. OFFICE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION FACILITIES MODERNIZATION

~~Sec. 701. Short title.~~

~~This title may be cited as the "Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization Establishment Act of 2007". Repealed~~

~~Sec. 702. Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization; establishment.~~

~~(a) There is established within the executive branch of the government of the District of Columbia an Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization ("OFM"), which shall be headed by a Director.~~

~~(b) The OFM shall have independent procurement and personnel authority. The OFM shall promulgate rules to implement this authority. The proposed rules for procurement and for personnel shall be submitted to the Council for a 45-day period of review. If the Council does not approve or disapprove the proposed rules, by resolution, within the 45-day review period, the proposed rules shall be deemed approved.~~

~~(c) The OFM shall be funded annually out of the Public School Capital Improvement Fund ("Fund"), established by the School Modernization Financing Act of 2006, effective June 8, 2006 (D.C. Law 16-123; D.C. Official Code § 38-2971.01 *et seq.*) ("School Modernization Financing Act").~~

~~Sec. 703. Director; appointment.~~~~The Director of OFM shall be appointed by the Mayor with the advice and consent of the Council pursuant to section 2(a) of the Confirmation Act of 1978, effective March 3, 1979 (D.C. Law 2-142; D.C. Official Code § 1-523.01(a)). The Director shall:~~

- ~~(1) Receive such compensation as determined by the Mayor; and~~
- ~~(2) Have extensive experience in construction project management.~~

~~Sec. 704. Director; authority. The Director shall:~~

- ~~(1) Direct and supervise the administration and management of OFM;~~
- ~~(2) Have the authority to hire and fire personnel within OFM;~~
- ~~(3) Have the authority to manage the financial affairs of OFM;~~
- ~~(4) Consult regularly with the Chancellor, the Public School Modernization Advisory Committee, established by section 201 of the School Modernization Financing Act, and the State Superintendent of Education to ensure coordination throughout the school modernization process;~~
- ~~(5) Employ an architect to review designs;~~
- ~~(6) Direct and manage the modernization or new construction of District of Columbia Public Schools ("DCPS") facilities by approving and authorizing decisions at every stage of school modernization, including planning, design, procurement, and construction, in accordance with the Facilities Master Plan required by the School Modernization Financing Act; provided, that it shall not manage routine maintenance at DCPS facilities;~~
- ~~(7) In consultation with DCPS, seek amendments, if any, to the Facilities Master Plan necessary or desirable to improve the effectiveness of OFM and advance the purposes of this title;~~
- ~~(8) Enter into contracts and execute any instrument necessary or desirable to improve the effectiveness of OFM and advance the purposes of this title; and~~
- ~~(9) Comply with the requirements of the First Source Employment Agreement Act of 1984, effective June 29, 1984 (D.C. Law 5-93; D.C. Official Code § 2-219.01 *et. seq.*), and the requirements of the Small, Local, and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Development and Assistance Act of 2005, effective October 20, 2005 (D.C. Law 16-33; D.C. Official Code § 2-218.01 *et. seq.*).~~

~~Sec. 705. Reporting requirement.~~~~By December 1 of each year, beginning with 2008, OFM shall submit to the Mayor, the Council, the Public School Modernization Advisory Committee, and the Board of Education or State Board of Education, a report of all the activities of the OFM during the preceding fiscal year, including related financial statements and summaries of projects, the total amount of contract expenditures awarded to local, small, and disadvantaged business enterprises, and the number of employees who are District residents.~~

## TITLE VIII. PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY REFORM

## Sec. 801. Short title.

This title may be cited as the "Public Charter Schools Accountability Reform Amendment Act of 2007".

Sec. 802. The District of Columbia School Reform Act of 1995, approved April 26, 1996 (110 Stat.

1321-107; D.C. Official Code § 38-1800.01 *et seq.*), is amended as follows:

(a) Section 2201 (D.C. Official Code § 38-1802.01) is amended by adding a new subsection (f) to read as follows:

“(f) *Existing public charter schools.*— A public charter school that existed prior to the effective date of the Public Charter Schools Accountability Reform Amendment Act of 2007, passed on 2<sup>nd</sup> reading on April 19, 2007 (Enrolled version of Bill 17-1), and that was chartered by the District of Columbia Board of Education pursuant to the Public Charter Schools Act of 1996, effective May 29, 1996 (D.C. Law 11-135, D.C. Official Code § 38-1701.01 *et seq.*), shall not be required to file a petition with the Public Charter School Board; it shall be considered approved and chartered for the purposes of this act and shall be subject to the powers and duties granted to the Public Charter School Board as an eligible chartering authority pursuant to sections 2211, 2212, and 2213. ”.

(b) Section 2203(j)(2) (D.C. Official Code § 38-1802.03(j)(2)) is amended by striking the phrase "of Columbia." and inserting the phrase "of Columbia or by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education. In the case of review by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education shall issue procedures for the submission and review of appeals." in its place.

(c) Section 2204(c) (D.C. Official Code § 38-1802.04(c)), is amended by adding new paragraphs (19) and (20) to read as follows:

“(19) *Participation in education data warehouse.*—A public charter school shall participate in the longitudinal education data warehouse system and shall provide data to the Office of the State Superintendent of Education upon request.

“(20) *Cooperation with the Office of Ombudsman for Public Education.*— A public charter school shall cooperate with the Office of Ombudsman for Public Education and shall comply with the disclosure protections of the Ombudsman for Public Education Establishment Act of 2007, passed on 2<sup>nd</sup> reading on April 19, 2007 (Enrolled version of Bill 17-1).”.

(d) Section 2212(a)(3) (D.C. Official Code § 38-1802.12(a)(3)) is amended to read as follows:

“(3) *Review.*—An eligible chartering authority that grants or renews a charter pursuant to paragraph (1) or (2) of this subsection shall review the charter at least once every 5 years to determine whether the charter should be revoked for the reasons described in section 2213(a) or (b), in accordance with the procedures for revocation established under section 2213.

(e) Section 2213 (D.C. Official Code § 38-1802.13) is amended as follows:

(1) Subsection (a) is amended to read as follows:

“(a) *Charter or law violations; failure to meet goals.*—Using the record established by the chartering authority, an eligible chartering authority that has granted a charter to a public charter school may revoke the charter if the eligible chartering authority determines that the school:

“(1) Committed a violation of applicable law or a material violation of the conditions, terms, standards, or procedures set forth in the charter, including violations relating to the education of children with disabilities; or

“(2) Has failed to meet the goals and student academic achievement expectations set forth in the charter.”.

(2) Subsection (c)(5) is amended by striking the phrase "Board of Education" and inserting the phrase "eligible chartering authority" in its place.

(f) Section 2214 (D.C. Official Code § 38-1802.14) is amended as follows:

(1) Subsection (b)(3) is amended by striking the period at the end and inserting the phrase ", and all meetings of the Board shall be open to the public and shall provide a reasonable time during the meeting for public comment." in its place.

(2) A new subsection (i) is added to read as follows:

“(i) *Freedom of Information Act.* - The Board shall comply with all

provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, effective March 25, 1977 (D.C. Law 1-96; D.C. Official Code § 2-531 *et seq.*).

(g) Section 2552 (D.C. Official Code § 38-1805.52) is amended by striking the phrase "Superintendent and Board of Education shall consult with the Mayor, the Council" and inserting the phrase "Mayor shall consult with the Council, the Director of the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization," in its place.

Sec. 803. The Public Charter Schools Act of 1996, effective May 29, 1996 (D.C. Law 11-135; D.C. Official Code § 38-1701.01 *et seq.*), is repealed.

Sec. 804. Applicability.  
Section 802 shall apply upon enactment by Congress.

#### TITLE IX. CHARTER AMENDMENT REQUEST

Sec. 901. Short title.

This title may be cited as the "District of Columbia Board of Education Charter Amendment Act of 2007".

Sec. 902. The District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 777; D.C. Official Code § 1-201.01 *et seq.*), is amended as follows:

- (a) Section 452 (D.C. Official Code § 1-204.52) is repealed.
- (b) Section 495 (D.C. Official Code § 1-204.95) is repealed.

Sec. 903. Applicability.  
This title shall apply upon enactment by Congress.

#### TITLE X. CONFORMING AMENDMENTS

Sec. 1001. Section 301 of the District of Columbia Government Comprehensive Merit Personnel Act of 1978, effective March 3, 1979 (D.C. Law 2-139; D.C. Official Code § 1-603.01), is amended as follows:

- (a) Paragraph (m) is amended by striking the phrase "but not limited to, the District of Columbia Board of Education,".
- (b) Paragraph (q) is amended as follows:
  - (A) Strike the word "and" at the end of paragraph (61).
  - (B) Strike the period at the end of paragraph (62) and insert the phrase ";and" in its place.
- (C) A new paragraph (63) is added to read as follows:  
"(63) District of Columbia Public Schools."

Sec. 1002. The District of Columbia Procurement Practices Act of 1985, effective February 21, 1986 (D.C. Law 6-85; D.C. Official Code § 2-301.01 *et seq.*), is amended as follows:

- (a) Section 104(d) (D.C. Official Code § 2-301.04(d)) is repealed.
- (b) Section 320 (D.C. Official Code § 2-303.20) is amended by adding a new subsection (r) to read as follows:  
"(r) Notwithstanding section 105(a), (b), (c), and (e), the Mayor may designate the Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools as the procurement authority for District of Columbia Public Schools, consistent with the other provisions of this act."

Sec. 1003. An Act To fix and regulate the salaries of teachers, school officers, and other employees of the board of education of the District of Columbia, approved June 20, 1906 (34 Stat. 316; D.C. Official Code § 38-101 *et seq.*), is amended as follows:

- (a) Section 2(a)-(f) (D.C. Official Code § 38-101) is repealed.
- (b) Section 2(h) (D.C. Official Code § 38-103) is amended by striking the phrase "The Board of Education" and inserting the phrase "The Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools" in its place.
- (c) Section 3(1) (D.C. Official Code § 38-105) is repealed.
- (d) Section 3(2) (D.C. Official Code § 38-106) is repealed.
- (e) Section 14 (D.C. Official Code § 38-156) is amended by striking the phrase "The Board of Education, upon the approval of the Mayor, and with the consent of the Council by resolution," and inserting the phrase "The Mayor, with the consent of the Council by resolution," in its place.

Sec. 1004. Section 1 of An Act To authorize appointment of public-school employees between meetings of the Board of Education, approved April 22, 1932 (47 Stat. 134; D.C. Official Code § 38-131), is amended to read as follows:

"Sec. 1. Provisional duties of the Chancellor.

"The Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools is authorized to accept the resignation or the application for retirement of any employee, to grant leave of absence to any employee, to extend or terminate any temporary appointment, and to make all changes in personnel and appointments growing out of such resignation, retirement, leave of absence, termination of temporary appointment, or caused by the decease or suspension of any employee."

Sec. 1005. Section 143 of the District of Columbia Appropriations Act, 1995, approved September 30, 1994 (108 Stat. 2594; D.C. Official Code § 38-154), is amended as follows:

- (a) Subsection (a) is amended by striking the phrase "Hereafter, the Board of Education" and inserting the phrase "The Chancellor" in its place.
- (b) Subsection (d)(1) is amended as follows:
  - (1) Strike the phrase "Board of Education of the District of Columbia" and insert the word "Mayor" in its place.
  - (2) Strike the phrase "Congress, and to the Mayor and Council" and insert the phrase "Congress and to the Council" in its place.

Sec. 1006. Section 2 of the District of Columbia Board of Education School Seal Act of 1978, effective August 2, 1978 (D.C. Law 2-96; D.C. Official Code § 38-155), is amended by striking the phrase "The Board of Education of the District of Columbia" and inserting the phrase "The Mayor" in its place.

Sec. 1007. Section 1203 of the Budget Support Act of 1995, effective March 5, 1996 (D.C. Law 11-98; D.C. Official Code § 38-157), is amended as follows:

- (a) Strike the phrase "District of Columbia Board of Education" wherever it appears and insert the phrase "District of Columbia Public Schools" in its place.
- (b) Strike the word "Superintendent" and insert the word "Chancellor" in its place.

Sec. 1008. Section 3 of the District of Columbia Public School Support Initiative of 1986, effective February 17, 1988 (D.C. Law 7-68; D.C. Official Code § 38-917), is amended as follows:

- (a) Strike the phrase "District of Columbia Board of Education" both times it appears and insert the phrase "Chancellor" in its place.

(b) Strike the phrase "Board of Education" wherever it appears and insert the phrase "Chancellor" in its place.

Sec. 1009. Section 1104 of the School Based Budgeting and Accountability Act of 1998, effective March 26, 1999 (D.C. Law 12-175; D.C. Official Code § 38-2803), is amended as follows:

(a) Subsection (a) is amended by striking the phrase "June 30, 2006" and inserting the phrase "June 1, 2007" in its place.

(b) Subsection (b)(1) is amended by striking the phrase "Board of Education" and inserting the phrase "District of Columbia Public Schools" in its place.

(c) Subsection (c) is amended striking the phrase "Superintendent and Board of Education shall consult with the Mayor, the Council," and inserting the phrase "Mayor shall consult with the Council, the Director of the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization," in its place.

(d) Subsection (d) is amended by striking the phrase "Board of Education" and inserting the word "Mayor" in its place.

Sec. 1010. The School Modernization Financing Act of 2006, effective June 8, 2006 (D.C. Law 16-123; D.C. Official Code § 38-2971.01 *et seq.*), is amended as follows:

(a) Section 101 (D.C. Official Code § 38-2971.01) is amended as follows:

(1) Subsection (a) is amended by striking the phrase "District of Columbia Public Schools capital budget" and inserting the phrase "Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization" in its place.

(2) Subsection (d) is amended striking the phrase "that are requested by the Board of Education to the Board of Education through the District of Columbia Public Schools capital budget" and inserting the phrase "to the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization" in its place.

(3) Subsection (e) is amended by striking the phrase "District of Columbia Public Schools" and inserting the phrase "Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization" in its place.

(b) Section 102 (D.C. Official Code § 38-2971.02) is amended by striking the phrase in the heading "District of Columbia Public School" and inserting the phrase "Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization" in its place.

(c) Section 103 (D.C. Official Code § 38-2971.03) is amended as follows:

(1) Subsection (a)(1) is amended as follows:

(A) Strike the phrase "Board of Education" and insert the phrase "Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization" in its place.

(B) Strike the phrase "District of Columbia Public Schools" and insert the phrase "Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization" in its place.

(C) Strike the phrase "modernization of public school facilities" and insert the phrase "modernization of public school facilities and to pay for the budget and administrative costs of the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization" in its place.

(2) Subsection (b) is amended as follows:

(A) Strike the phrase "Board of Education" and insert the phrase "Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization" in its place.

(B) Strike the phrase "in accordance with" and insert the phrase "to fund the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization and to modernize District of Columbia Public Schools in accordance with" in its place.

(3) Subsection (c) is amended by striking the phrase "Board of Education through the District of Columbia of Columbia Public Schools capital budget" and inserting the phrase "Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization" in its place.

(4) Subsection (d) is amended by striking the phrase "the Board of Education" and inserting the phrase "Secretary to the Council of the District of Columbia" in its place.

(d) Section 104(a)(4) (D.C. Official Code § 38-2971.04(a)(4)) is amended as follows:

(1) Strike the word “Superintendent” and insert the phrase “Director of the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization” in its place.

(2) Strike the phrase “District of Columbia Public Schools” and insert the phrase “Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization” in its place.

(e) Section 201 (D.C. Official Code § 38-2973.01) is amended as follows:

(1) Subsection (a) is amended as follows:

(A) Paragraph (1) is amended by striking the phrase “of the Board of Education and those of the District” and inserting the phrase “of the Mayor” in its place.

(B) Paragraph (3) is amended by striking the phrase “Board of Education” and inserting the phrase “Director of the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization” in its place.

(2) Subsection (b) is amended to read as follows: “(b) The

Committee shall consist of 11 members, as follows:

“(1) The Mayor shall appoint 5 members to the Committee, of which one member shall be the parent of a District of Columbia Public Schools (“DCPS”) student and one member shall be a teacher in DCPS.

“(2) The Council shall appoint 3 members.

“(3) The Chief Financial Officer shall appoint 2 members. “(4) The Board of the Education shall appoint one member.”.

(3) Subsection (d) is amended by striking the phrase “3 years, with no more than one renewal” and inserting the phrase “3 years” in its place.

(4) Subsection (f) is amended by striking the phrase “Board of Education” and inserting the phrase “Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization” in its place.

(5) Subsection (g) is amended to read as follows:

“(g) The Chairperson of the Committee shall be designated by the Mayor in consultation with the Council and Chief Financial Officer.”.

(f) Section 202 (D.C. Official Code § 38-2973.02) is amended as follows:

(1) The heading is amended by striking the word “Superintendent” and inserting the phrase “the Director of the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization” in its place.

(2) Subsection (a) is amended by striking the word “Superintendent” and inserting the phrase “Director of the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization” in its place.

(3) Subsection (b) is amended by striking the word “Superintendent” and inserting the phrase “Director of the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization” in its place.

(4) Subsection (c) is amended to read as follows:

“(c) The Committee shall forward any written assessment provided to the Director of the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization to the Mayor, the Council, the Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools, and the Chief Financial Officer.”.

(5) Subsection (d) is amended as follows:

(A) Strike the word “Superintendent” and insert the phrase “Director of the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization” in its place.

(B) Strike the phrase “District of Columbia Public Schools” and insert the phrase “Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization” in its place.

(6) Subsection (e) is amended as follows:

(A) Paragraph (1) is amended as follows:

(i) Strike the word “Superintendent” and insert the phrase “Director of the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization” in its place.

(ii) Strike the phrase “the Chair of the Council, the Chair of the

Committee on Education, Libraries, and Recreation, and the President of the Board of Education." and insert the phrase "the Council, the Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools, and the Chief Financial Officer." in its place.

(B) Paragraph (2) is amended by striking the word "Superintendent" and inserting the phrase "Director of the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization" in its place.

(g) Section 203 (D.C. Official Code § 38-2973.03) is amended as follows:

(1) Subsection (a) is amended as follows:

(A) Strike the phrase "June 1, 2006" and insert the phrase "October 1, 2007" in its place.

(B) Strike the phrase "Superintendent, with the approval of the Board of Education," and insert the phrase "Director of the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization, in consultation with the Mayor," in its place.

(2) Subsection (b) is repealed.

(h) Section 204 (D.C. Official Code § 38-2973.04) is amended by striking the phrase "District of Columbia Public Schools" wherever it appears and inserting the phrase "Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization" in its place.

Sec. 1011. Applicability.

This title shall apply upon Congressional enactment of Title IX.

#### TITLE XI. FISCAL IMPACT; EFFECTIVE DATE

Sec. 1101. Fiscal impact statement.

The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement in the committee report as the fiscal impact statement required by section 602(c)(3) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code § 1-206.02(c)(3)).

Sec. 1102. Effective date.

This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto), a 30-day period of Congressional review as provided in section 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code § 1-206.02(c)(1)), and publication in the District of Columbia Register.

## Appendix D

### Information about the Functioning of the Education Agencies

This appendix presents tables and figures that supplement the discussion of the city's implementation of the requirements of the Public Education Reform Amendment Act (PERAA) in Chapter 3. It includes organizational charts for the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), a table summarizing the missions and responsibilities of the five education agencies and how those responsibilities have changed since PERAA was passed, and information about staffing and budgets for each agency.

**TABLE D-1** D.C. Education Agency Missions and Responsibilities

Agency	Office and Mission
District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)—Office of the Chancellor	<p>District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)—Central Office The mission of the District of Columbia Public Schools is to ensure that every DCPS school provides a world-class education that prepares all of our students, regardless of background or circumstance, for success in college, career, and life.</p> <p>SOURCE: Available:<a href="http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/About+DCPS">http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/About+DCPS</a> [September 2014]. This mission statement was subsequently taken off the website but is presented in A Capital Commitment, the agency's 5-year (2012-2017) plan at <a href="http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/About+DCPS/A+Capital+Commitment+-+DCPS+Strategic+Plan">http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/About+DCPS/A+Capital+Commitment+-+DCPS+Strategic+Plan</a> [February 2015].</p>
Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME)	<p>Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) The DME is responsible for developing and implementing the mayor's vision for academic excellence and creating a high-quality education continuum from birth to 24 (from early childhood to K-12 to post-secondary and the workforce).</p> <p>SOURCE: Available: <a href="http://dme.dc.gov/page/about-dme">http://dme.dc.gov/page/about-dme</a> [February 2015].</p>

Current Areas of Responsibility	Primary Changes Since PERAA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office of the Deputy Chancellor for Operations</li> <li>• Office of Data and Strategy</li> <li>• Office of Specialized Instruction</li> <li>• Office of Family and Public Engagement</li> <li>• Office of Teaching and Learning</li> <li>• Office of Human Capital</li> <li>• Office of Schools</li> </ul>	No significant changes in mission
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overseeing a systemwide education strategy</li> <li>• Managing interagency and cross-sector coordination</li> <li>• Providing oversight and support for the following education-related agencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— D.C. Public Library</li> <li>— DCPS</li> <li>— OSSE</li> <li>— PCSB</li> <li>— University of the District of Columbia</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Newly responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University of the District of Columbia</li> <li>DCPS</li> <li>PCSB</li> </ul> <p>No longer responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Office of the Ombudsman</li> <li>Interagency coordinating body</li> <li>Office of Public Education Facilities and Modernization</li> <li>Systemwide data system</li> </ul>

*continued*

TABLE D-1 Continued

Agency	Office and Mission
Office of the State Superintendent of Education of Education (OSSE)	<p>Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) OSSE's mission is to remove barriers and create pathways for D.C. residents to receive a great education and prepare them for success in college, careers, and life.</p> <p>SOURCE: Available: <a href="http://osse.dc.gov/page/about-osse">http://osse.dc.gov/page/about-osse</a> [September 2014].</p> <p>The mission statement was subsequently revised: OSSE is the State Education Agency for the District of Columbia charged with raising the quality of education for all DC residents. OSSE serves as the District's liaison to the U.S. Department of Education and works closely with the District's traditional and public charter schools to achieve its key functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overseeing all federal education programs and related grants administered in the District of Columbia.</li> <li>• Developing state-level standards aligned with school, college, and workforce readiness expectations.</li> <li>• Ensuring access to high-quality child care and universal pre-kindergarten for eligible District families.</li> <li>• Providing resources and support to assist the District's most vulnerable student populations.</li> <li>• Administering the annual DC Comprehensive Assessment System (DC CAS), the statewide student academic achievement exam.</li> <li>• Providing regional, door-to-door transportation to school for District children with special needs.</li> <li>• Awarding higher education financial assistance to eligible District students at public and private colleges and universities in DC and across the country.</li> <li>• Increasing health and physical education awareness as well as ensuring access to free meals year-round.</li> <li>• Overseeing the DC State Athletic Association (DCSAA), which provides interscholastic athletic programming that enriches the education experiences of all student-athletes.</li> <li>• Providing a one-stop source of statewide school data on each traditional and public charter school as well as resources to support children from birth to postsecondary education: LearnDC at <a href="http://osse.dc.gov/page/about-osse">http://osse.dc.gov/page/about-osse</a> [February 2015]</li> </ul>

Current Areas of Responsibility	Primary Changes Since PERAA
Primary Programs/Organization Divisions) <sup>a</sup>	Newly responsible for: <sup>a</sup>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Adult and Family Education</i></li> <li>• <i>Assessment and Accountability</i></li> <li>• <i>Specialized Education</i></li> <li>• <i>D.C. Youth ReEngagement Center</i></li> <li>• <i>Early Learning</i></li> <li>• <i>Educator Licensure and Accreditation</i></li> <li>• <i>Education Licensure Commission</i></li> <li>• <i>Elementary and Secondary Education</i></li> <li>• <i>Grants Management and Compliance</i></li> <li>• <i>Postsecondary Education</i></li> <li>• <i>Public Charter School Financing and Support</i></li> <li>• <i>Race to the Top</i></li> <li>• <i>Special Education Transportation</i></li> <li>• <i>Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLED)</i></li> <li>• <i>Student Hearing Office</i></li> <li>• <i>Wellness and Nutrition Services</i></li> </ul>	<p>Listed in PERAA but not explicitly in current mission statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing staff support to the State Board of Education</li> <li>• Providing for education of children in custody of the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services</li> <li>• Conducting studies and pilot projects to develop, review, or test state policy</li> </ul>

SOURCE: Available: <http://osse.dc.gov/service/programs>

*continued*

TABLE D-1 Continued

Agency	Office and Mission
D.C. State Board of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The mission of the D.C. State Board of Education is to provide policy leadership, support, advocacy, and oversight of public education to ensure that every student is valued and learns the skills and knowledge necessary to become informed, competent, and contributing global citizens.</li> <li>• The State Board views its role in the achievement of this mission as one of shared responsibility, whereby it engages families, students, educators, community members, elected officials, and business leaders to play a vital role in preparing every child for college and/or career success.</li> </ul>

SOURCE: Available: <http://sboe.dc.gov/page/roles> [February 2015].

Public Charter School Board	<p>Our goal is to ensure that students and families in Washington, DC have access to quality public charter school education. We do that by setting tough academic standards, using a comprehensive charter application review process and effective oversight, providing meaningful support and actively involving parents, school leaders, and community and policy makers.</p>
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SOURCE: Available: <http://www.dcpccb.org/about-us> [February 2015].

<p>Statewide Commission on Children, Youth, and Their Families (SCCYF)</p> <p>Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization (OPEFM)</p>	
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<sup>a</sup>Items in italics were either not explicitly specified in PERAA or not part of the agency's portfolio in 2011 (National Research Council, 2011)

SOURCE: Information compiled from the department's websites listed above, September 2014-February 2015. We note that information on several agency websites changed during that time.

Current Areas of Responsibility	Primary Changes Since PERAA
<p>PERAA specified that the SBOE would “advise the State Superintendent” or “approve” policies on matters such as state standards and state policies in particular areas. The SBOE does not have the authority to initiate policies. The SBOE lists its responsibilities as including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State academic standards</li> <li>• Standards for high school equivalence credentials</li> <li>• High school graduation requirements</li> <li>• Standards for high school equivalence credentials</li> <li>• State definitions of “adequate yearly progress” and “proficiency”</li> <li>• State definition and standards for “highly qualified teachers,” pursuant to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001</li> <li>• Standards for accreditation and certification of teacher preparation programs of colleges and universities</li> <li>• Approves or rejects applications for new charter schools</li> <li>• Provide oversight in holding schools to high standards</li> <li>• Provide support and feedback to schools</li> <li>• Solicit community input</li> </ul>	<p>Newly responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Office of the Ombudsman</li> <li>Office of the Student Advocate</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The state accountability plan for the District of Columbia developed by the Chief State School Officer, pursuant to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001</li> <li>• State policies for parental involvement</li> <li>• State policies for supplemental education service providers operating in the city</li> <li>• Rules for residency verification</li> <li>• List of charter school accreditation organizations</li> <li>• Categories and format of the annual report card, pursuant to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001</li> <li>• List of private placement accreditation organizations</li> <li>• Approval for state rules for enforcing school attendance requirements</li> <li>• Approval for state standards for home schooling</li> </ul> <p>No significant changes in mission</p> <p>The SCCYF no longer exists. See text for additional details</p> <p>Moved to Department of General Services  <a href="http://dgs.dc.gov/page/about-department-general-services">http://dgs.dc.gov/page/about-department-general-services</a> [September 2014].</p>

**TABLE D-2 Agency Staffing Structures and Operating Budgets**

Agency	Office Staff (proposed fiscal 2015)	School Support Staff (proposed fiscal 2015)	Fiscal 2014 Operating Budget and Proposed Fiscal 2015 Budget
DCPS Central Office and School Support Staff <sup>a</sup>			
• Office of the Chancellor	49	99	2014: \$175,753,000 (for central office and school support)
• Office of Human Capital	106	55	
• Office of Specialized Instruction	39	311	2015: \$175,753,000
• Office of Data and Strategy	50.5	10	
• Office of the Chief of Schools	0	162	
• Office of Teaching and Learning	4	76	
• Office of Family and Public Engagement	11	9	
• Office of Chief Financial Officer	45	0	
• Office of General Counsel	0	0	
Total FTEs (not including school personnel)	304.5	632	

SOURCE: Available: [http://cfo.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ocfo/publication/attachments/ga\\_deps\\_chapter\\_2015a.pdf](http://cfo.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ocfo/publication/attachments/ga_deps_chapter_2015a.pdf) [July 2015].

PCSB	[budget document confusing—need to confirm. Website indicates:	2014: \$4,208,816 2015: \$6,741,290
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive and Deputy Directors</li> <li>• School Performance Department</li> <li>• Legal Department</li> <li>• Communications Department</li> <li>• Finance, Operations and Strategic Initiatives Department</li> </ul>	<p>2</p> <p>16</p> <p>5</p> <p>4</p> <p>9</p>	
Total		36

SOURCE: Available: [http://cfo.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ocfo/publication/attachments/gb\\_dcpcsb\\_chapter\\_2015a.pdf](http://cfo.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ocfo/publication/attachments/gb_dcpcsb_chapter_2015a.pdf) [July 2015].

TABLE D-2 Continued

Agency	Office Staff (proposed fiscal 2015)	School Support Staff (proposed fiscal 2015)	Fiscal 2014 Operating Budget and Proposed Fiscal 2015 Budget
OSSE			2014: \$446,685,259
• Agency Financial Operations	21.8		
• Educational Facilities and Partnerships	0		2015: \$450, 917,922
• Deputy Superintendent of Business and Support	0		
• Teaching and Learning Childcare Program Development	38		
• Office of the Director	0		
• General Education Tuition	37		
• Office of the Chief Operating Officer	21		
• Office of the Chief Information Officer	51		
• Office of Wellness and Nutrition Services	52		
• Elementary and Secondary Education	45		
• Postsecondary Education and Workforce Readiness	68.2		
• Office of Early Childhood Education	48		
• Special Education			
Total FTEs	382		
SOURCE: Available: <a href="http://cfo.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ocfo/publication/attachments/gd_osse_chapter_2015a.pdf">http://cfo.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ocfo/publication/attachments/gd_osse_chapter_2015a.pdf</a> [July 2015].			
Deputy Mayor for Education	2014: 12	None	Fiscal 2014 \$1,826,134
SOURCE: Available: <a href="http://cfo.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ocfo/publication/attachments/gw_dme_chapter_2015a.pdf">http://cfo.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ocfo/publication/attachments/gw_dme_chapter_2015a.pdf</a> [July 2015].	2015: 16		Fiscal 2015: \$6,917,249 <sup>b</sup>

State Board of Education	18	None	2014: \$866,475 2015: \$1,151,555 <sup>c</sup>
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<sup>a</sup>The positions listed as office staff are management employees. Other support staff, such as managers, coordinators, specialists, analysts, and clerical staff, etc., are included in the school support totals.

<sup>b</sup>According to the fiscal 2015 Budget Guide, the proposed budget “includes a one-time increase of \$4,000,000 for the development of a language immersion public charter school campus, which will serve middle and high school students,” as well as “the development and management of an athletic and community meeting space on the grounds of a public charter school” (p. D-135).

<sup>c</sup>Funding for the Office of the Student Advocate and Office of the Ombudsman were added for fiscal 2015, p. D-129.

SOURCE: All information obtained from District of Columbia Budget Guides for fiscal 2015, available at the website of the Chief Financial Officer: <http://cfo.dc.gov/node/805862> [December 2014].





FIGURE D-2 Office of the State Superintendent of Education organizational chart. SOURCE: Office of the State Superintendent of Education (2014c).



## Appendix E

# Recommendations Regarding Special Education, American Institutes for Research

The American Institutes for Research prepared a report for the Office of the State Superintendent of Education that evaluated special education in D.C.'s public schools. This appendix reproduces the recommendations from that report. The report covers both District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and the public charter schools, referred to here as local education agencies, or LEAs.

The text is taken from American Institutes for Research (2013).

1. All LEAs and public schools should be required to participate in system-wide reform efforts related to special education, including system-wide studies. The large numbers of charter LEAs that declined to participate in this study not only impacted the representativeness of our findings, but also reflects the challenges of implementing system-wide reform efforts in the District. If each LEA—of which there are more than 50 in the District—is allowed to opt out and manage its special education programs completely independent of other LEAs, it will result in a fractured, ineffective approach to improving programs and outcomes. We understand that the law allows charter LEA autonomy, but coordination across the system needs to improve for reform to occur.
2. Given the high student mobility within the District, OSSE [Office of the State Superintendent of Education] should consider developing a special education consortium of DCPS, PCSB [Public Charter School Board], charter LEAs, and non-public schools to articulate

alignment of standards and curricula for SWDs [students with disabilities] within and across LEAs and schools. This is intended to facilitate smooth transitions and continuity of programs for SWDs moving across and within school systems.

3. OSSE, DCPS, and charter LEAs should provide more supports around academic standards used in DCPS and charter schools, including appropriate curriculum, materials, and professional development as they relate to instruction of SWDs. The alignment of standards described in the second recommendation above will help improve the impact and efficiency of such supports.
4. OSSE, in concert with DCPS, PCSB, and charter LEAs, should develop a Master Plan for implementing site-based, ongoing professional development that will address the provision of appropriate academic instruction and behavioral supports for SWDs. Training topics should focus on effective differentiated instruction, literacy strategies for non-proficient students, and strategies for effective co-teaching and collaboration. The plan should delineate how professional development opportunities will include—and address the specific needs of—general education teachers, special education teachers, administrators, and other school staff, as appropriate. This plan should integrate site-based coaching and mentoring specifically related to instructing SWDs, with a particular emphasis on supports for new teachers and teachers new to teaching SWDs. OSSE, DCPS, and charter LEAs should provide supports to schools to implement the Master Plan. Because the existing District-wide professional development may not be accessible to many staff members across DCPS and charter schools, it is critical to have targeted, school-based training that aligns with the needs of staff in the school and allows staff to receive ongoing face-to-face, interactive experiences rather than relying extensively on one-time professional development sessions provided to a limited number of individuals or provided through online options.
5. OSSE, in conjunction with DCPS and the charter LEAs, should provide a clear definition of and expectations for the inclusion model being implemented across DC schools. To facilitate successful implementation, OSSE, DCPS, and the charter LEAs should offer supports for needed training, staffing, and resources to implement an inclusive philosophy that addresses the needs of SWDs in the least restrictive environment. This training should include a focus on the co-teaching model, as well as how to develop IEPs in

a manner that facilitates a successful inclusion model that is appropriate for that student.

6. OSSE, DCPS, PCSB, and charter LEAs should expect all schools to have in place a school-wide behavior plan that is consistently implemented and reinforced across the school. OSSE, DCPS, and charter LEAs should provide supports, such as training and behavior specialists, as needed and requested, and conduct monitoring to ensure consistent and ongoing implementation of school-wide behavior management.
7. OSSE, in conjunction with DCPS and charter LEAs, should provide mentoring and coaching for future and new principals that has an explicit focus on special education issues. We recommend that such ongoing coaching and mentoring be provided by principals with expertise in special education and those who have been successful in implementing quality special education programs in their schools. These “expert” principals might be identified through nominations from existing principal organizations within the District and from special education program staff in schools.
8. OSSE and DCPS should proactively consider the unique needs of public special education schools when planning, developing, and implementing supports and policies. Although the report did not explicitly discuss the staff and student needs at such schools, respondents delivered a powerful message that they were often overlooked in the process. These schools serve an important role in providing a continuum of services, and should be viewed as partners in the implementation of high quality special education programs.
9. OSSE should identify schools that are demonstrating exemplary practices in providing quality special education programs to serve as models for other schools. OSSE should establish infrastructure to encourage and facilitate school-to-school learning opportunities so that more schools can benefit from these exemplary practices.
10. OSSE should conduct a more in-depth study of the process of student evaluations and development of IEPs [individualized education plans] in the District. Our review of the documentation revealed concerns about the quality and process that merit further examination. OSSE should conduct ongoing review of a sample of student evaluations and IEPs, as was done in this study, to monitor

their quality and appropriateness and to tailor technical assistance and professional development to improve areas of concern.

11. OSSE, in conjunction with the other system-wide entities, should institute mechanisms to meaningfully seek input from schools during the decision-making process and to improve communication across the District. This may be accomplished through site visits and on-site focus groups, which will also give system staff an opportunity to not only learn first-hand about the schools but will also help raise OSSE's profile.
12. OSSE, DCPS, PCSB, and charter LEAs should reinforce the importance of family engagement by establishing expectations that all schools will have parent handbooks, parent resource centers, and a designated, trained parent coordinator at each site. Because of the inconsistency observed in the study schools, the systems should provide the necessary resources to support family engagement, and set an expectation that the schools should tailor their efforts for families of SWDs (e.g., ensure that parent resource centers include information for families of SWDs).

## Appendix F\*

### Student Outcomes: Detailed Data

This appendix complements Chapter 6 by providing more detailed data on a range of student outcomes. The data are all from the D.C. Comprehensive Student Assessment (DC CAS), which was the primary testing vehicle for students in the city’s public schools until 2014.

The 35 figures cover the following:

- Figure F-1 (A-G) shows reading scores for grades 3-8 and 10.
- Figure F-2 (A-G) shows math scores for grades 3-8 and 10.
- Figure F-3 (A-C) shows composition scores for grades 4, 7, and 10.
- Figure F-4 (A-I) shows reading scores that are summarized across grades for various students groups.
- Figure F-5 (A-I) shows math scores that are summarized across grades for various student groups.

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\*The contents of Appendix E—pages 300-320—are available at <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/21743/an-evaluation-of-the-public-schools-of-the-district-of-columbia>.

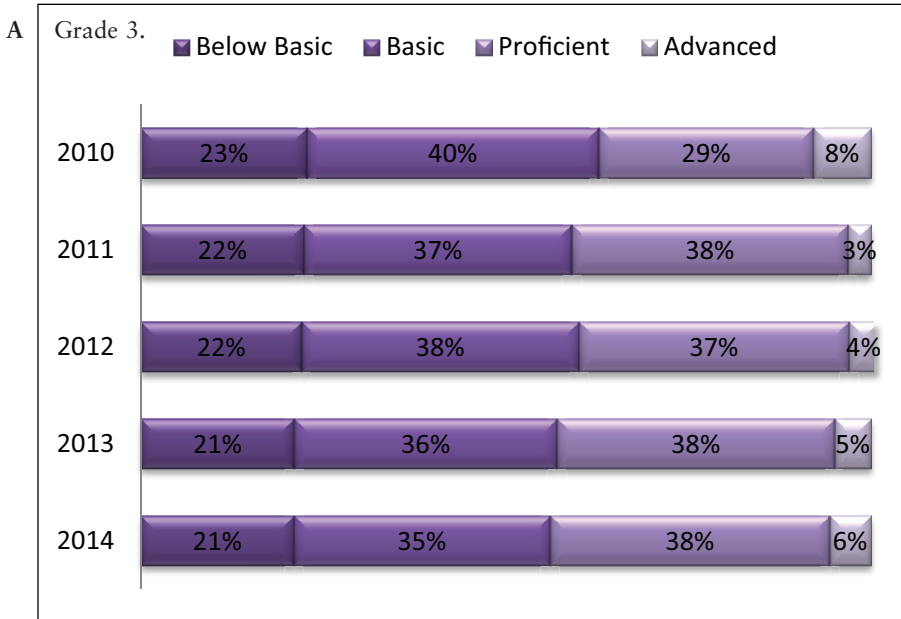
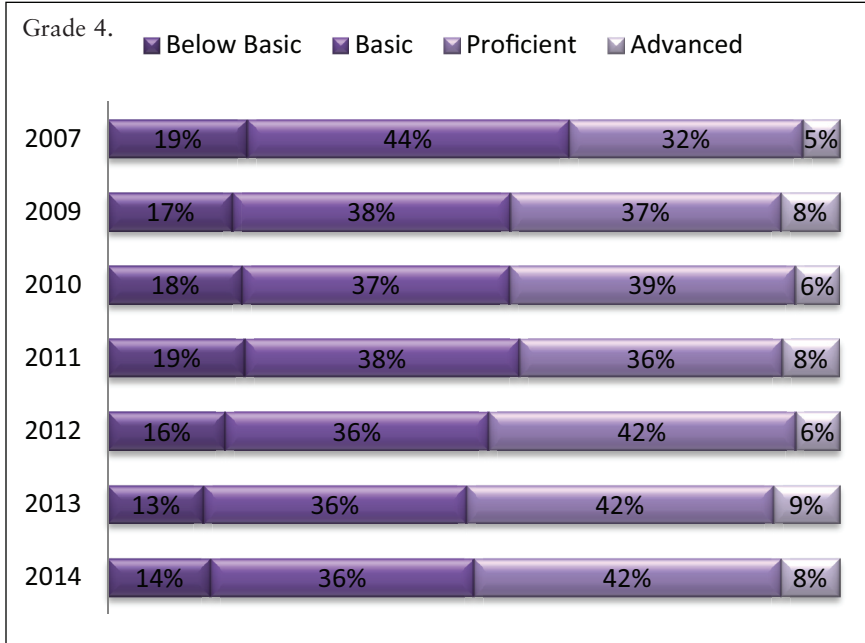


FIGURE F-1 (A-G) Percentage of students' scoring at each performance level by grade for DC CAS reading, 2007-2014.

SOURCE: Data from LearnDC at <http://www.learndc.org> [March 2015].

B



C

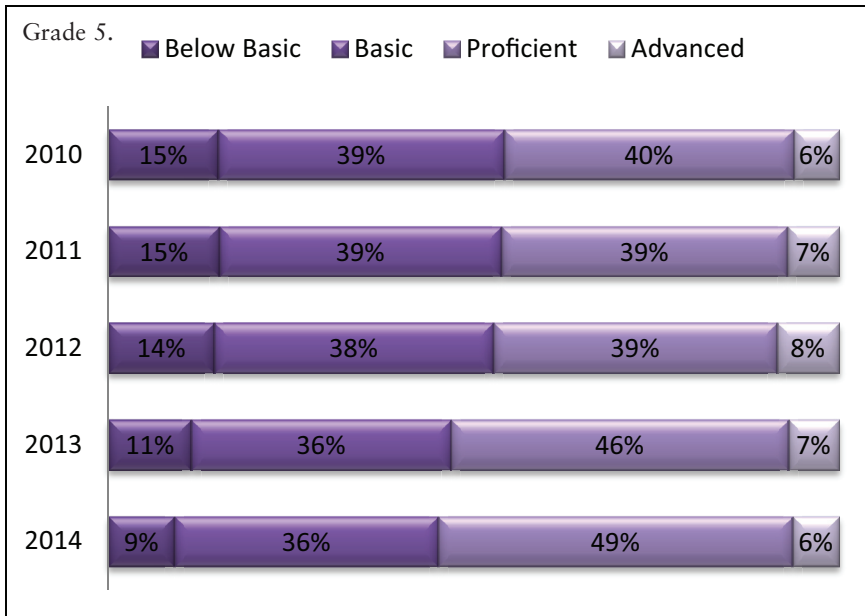
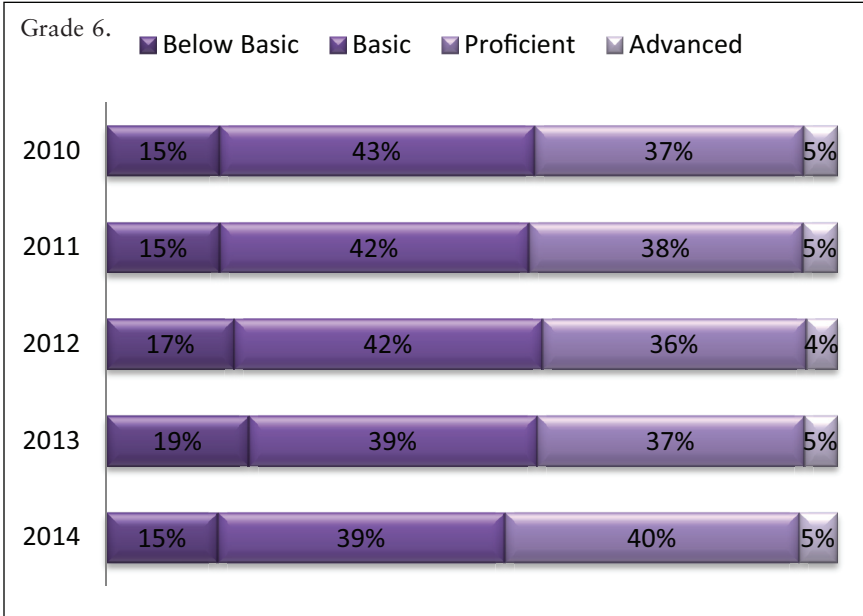


FIGURE F-1 Continued

D



E

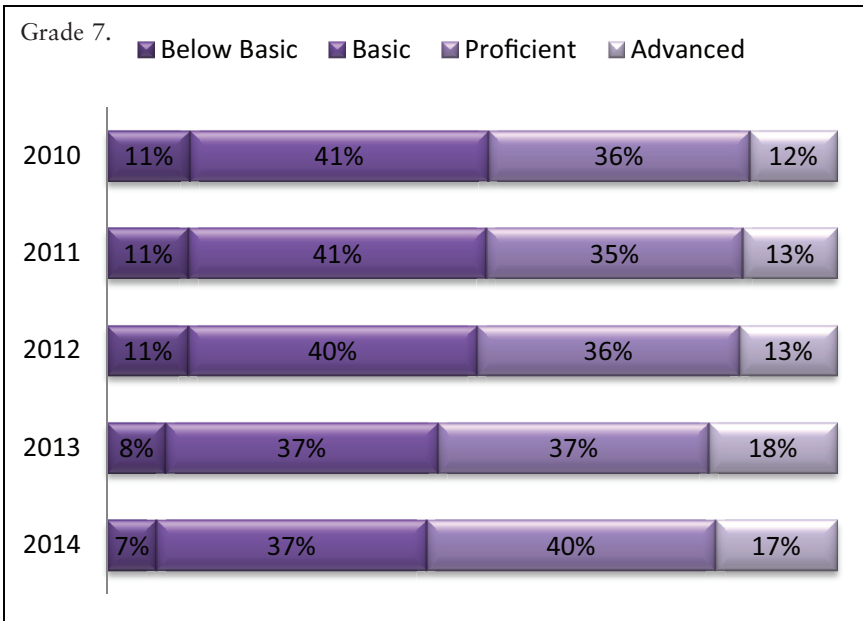


FIGURE F-1 Continued

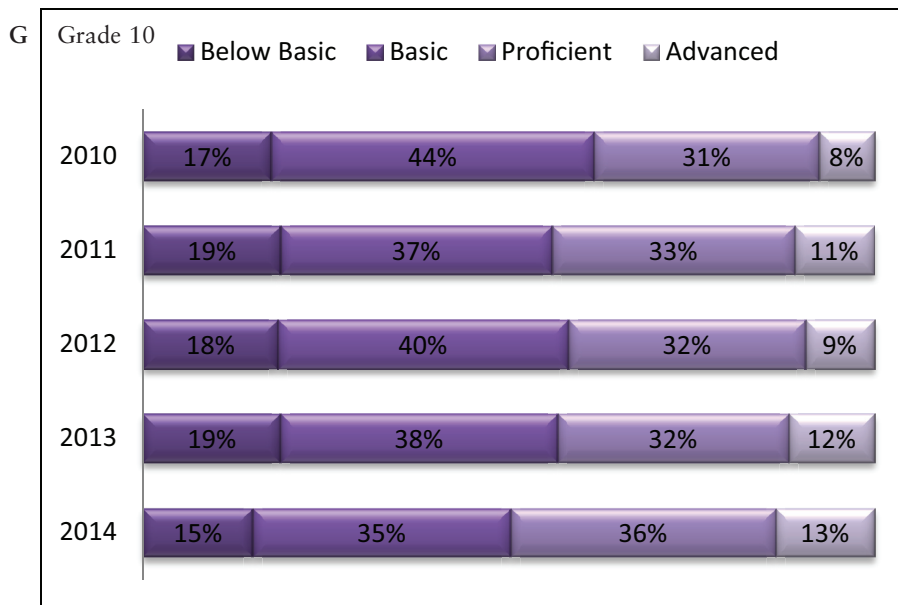
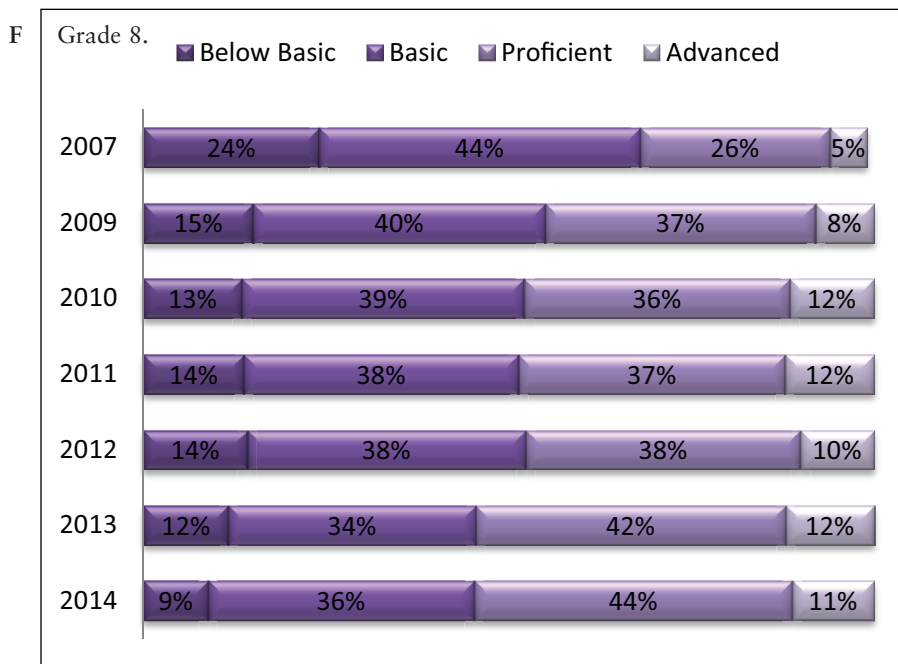


FIGURE F-1 Continued

## A Grade 3.

Below Basic
  Basic
  Proficient
  Advanced

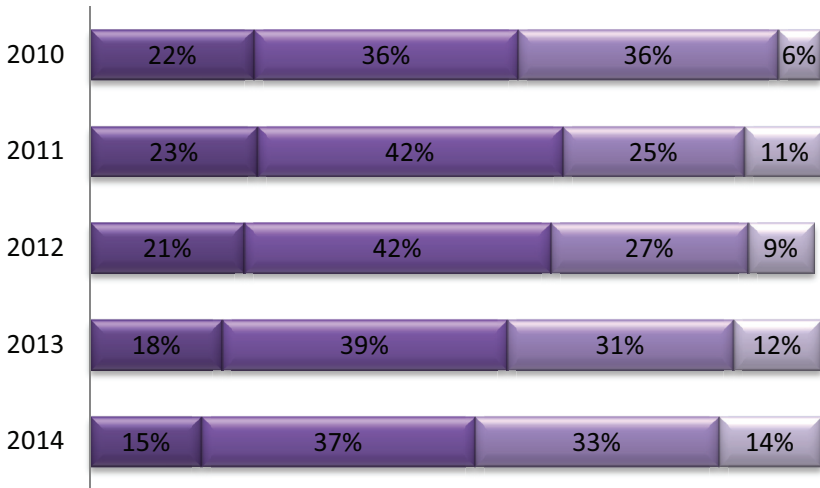


FIGURE F-2 (A-G) Percentage of students scoring at each performance level by grade for DC CAS math, 2007-2014 [3rd-grade testing did not begin until 2010]. SOURCE: Data from LearnDC at <http://www.learndc.org> [March 2015].

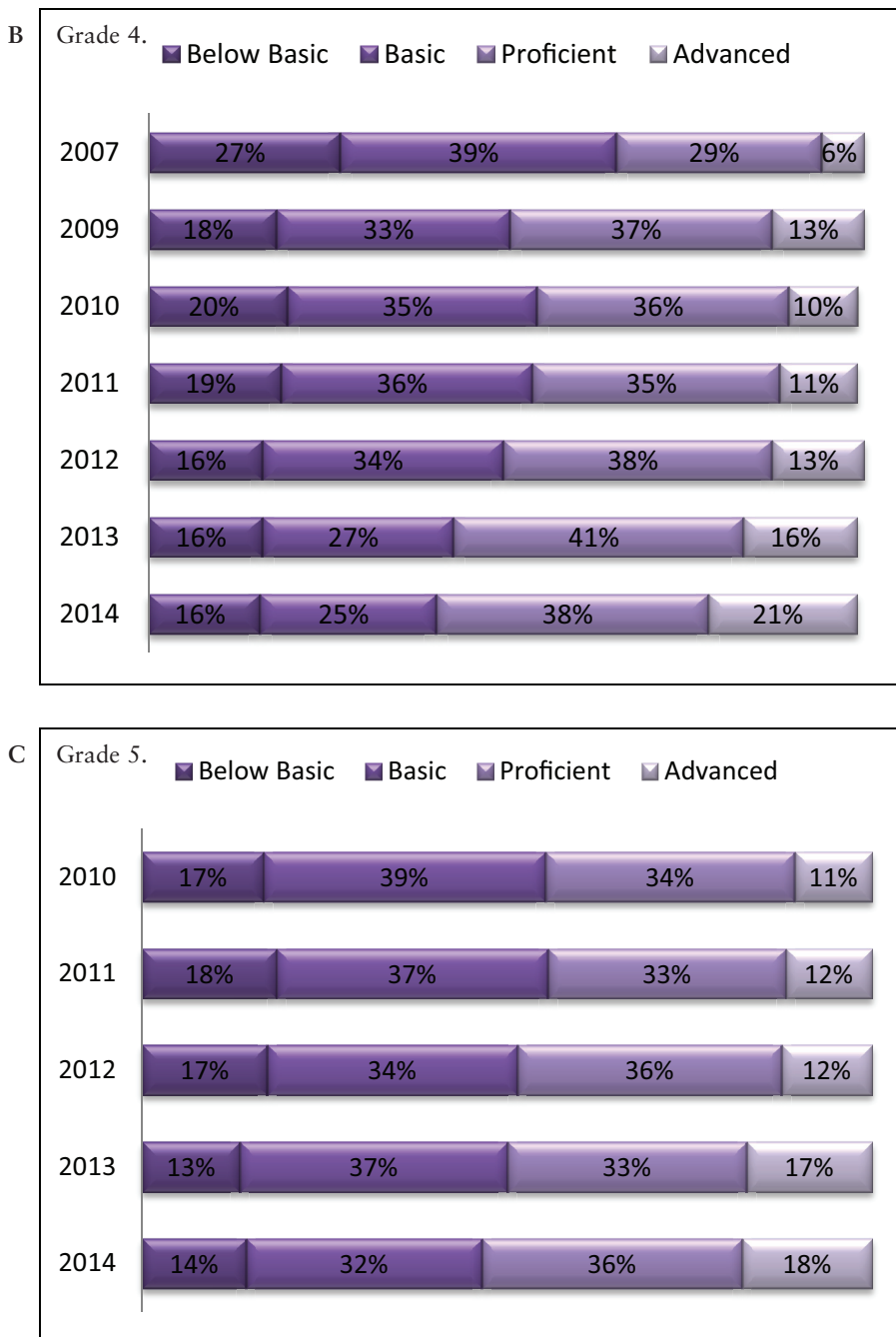
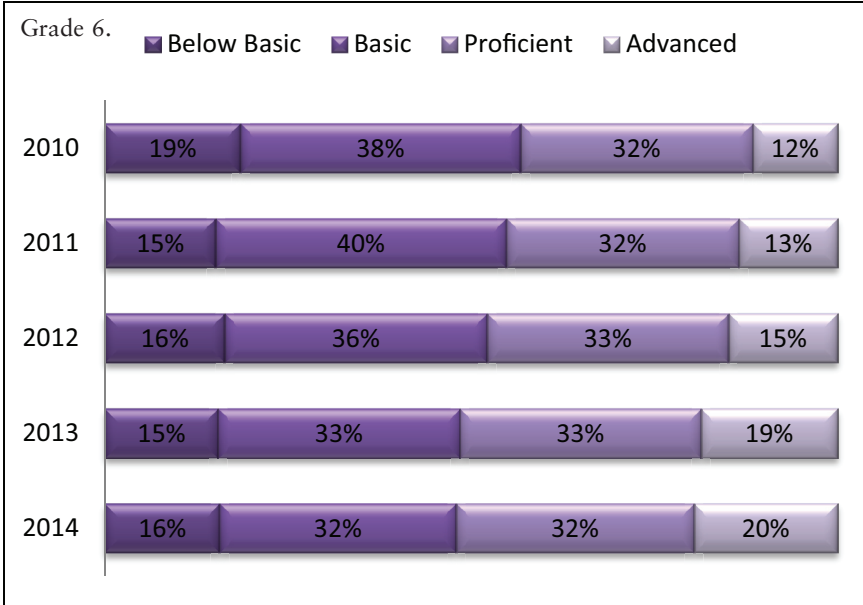


FIGURE F-2 Continued

D



E

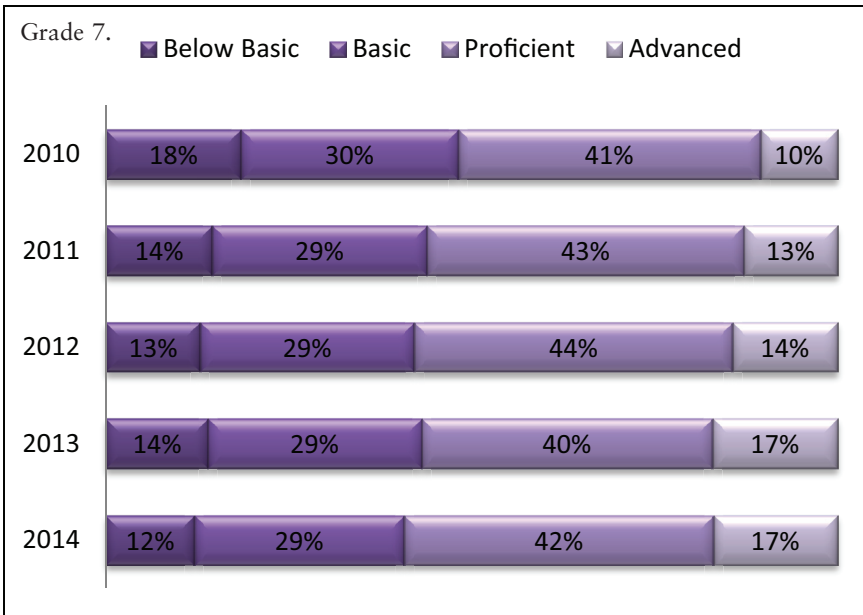


FIGURE F-2 Continued

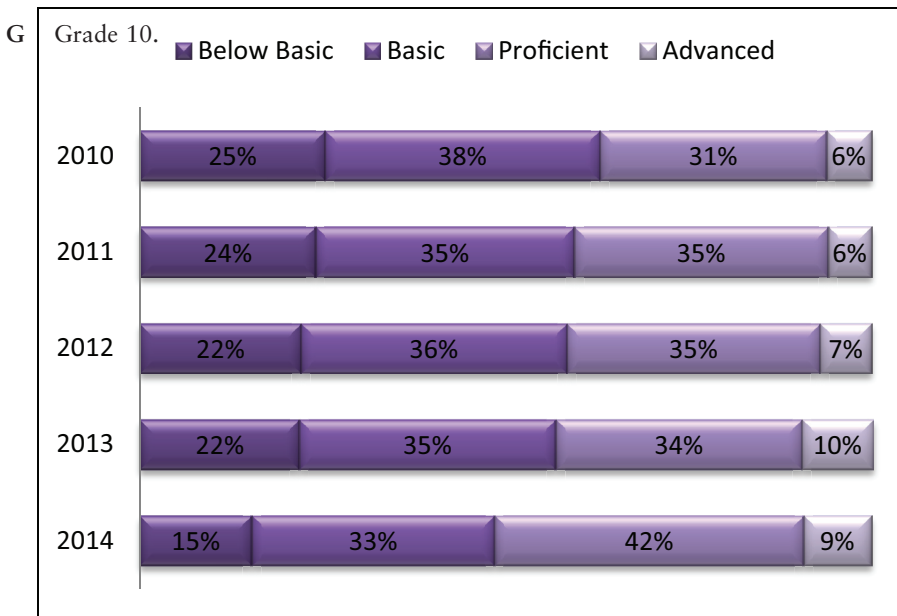
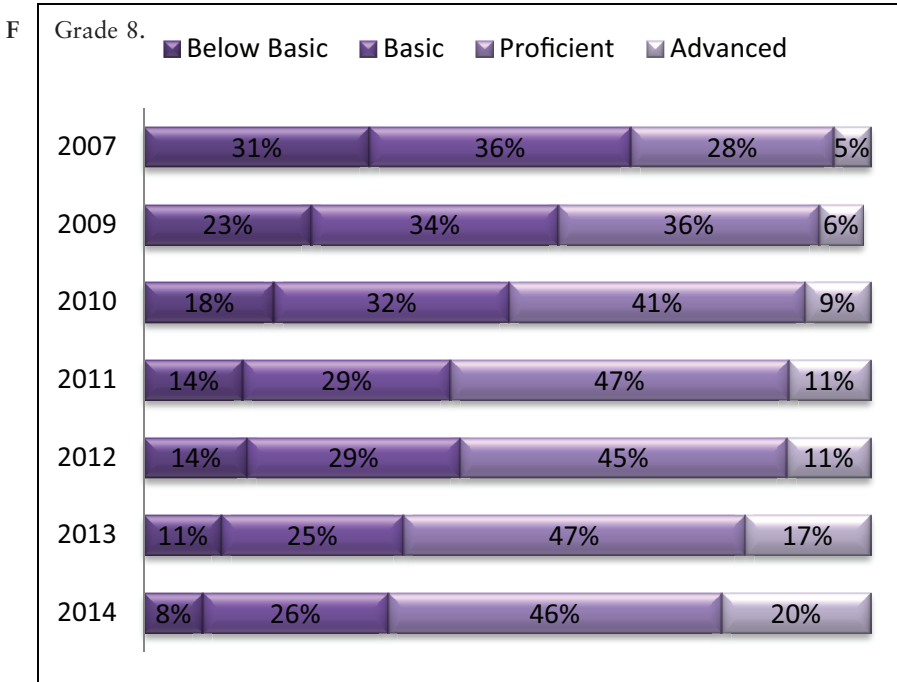


FIGURE F-2 Continued

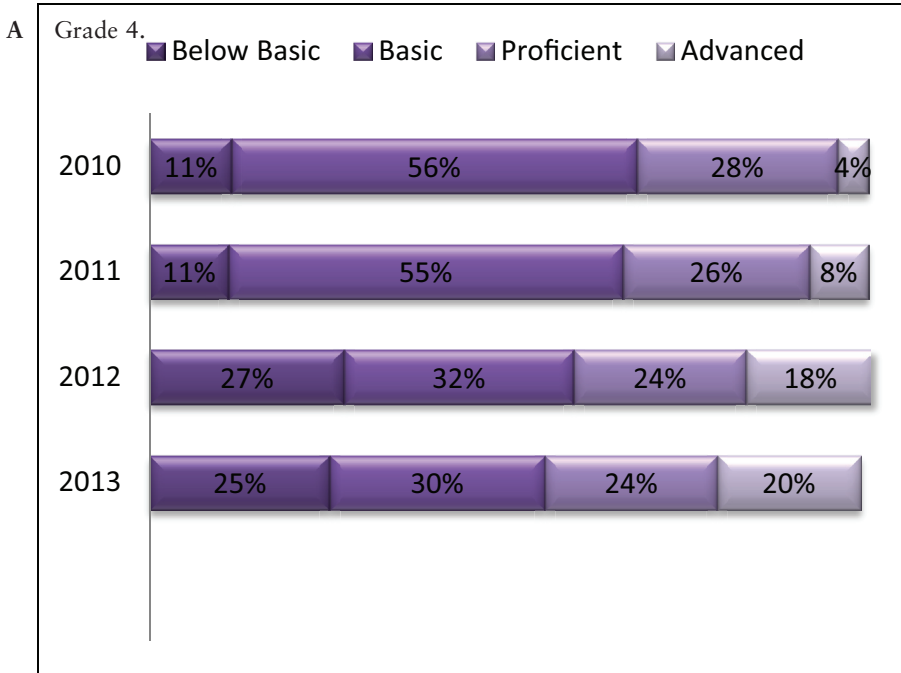
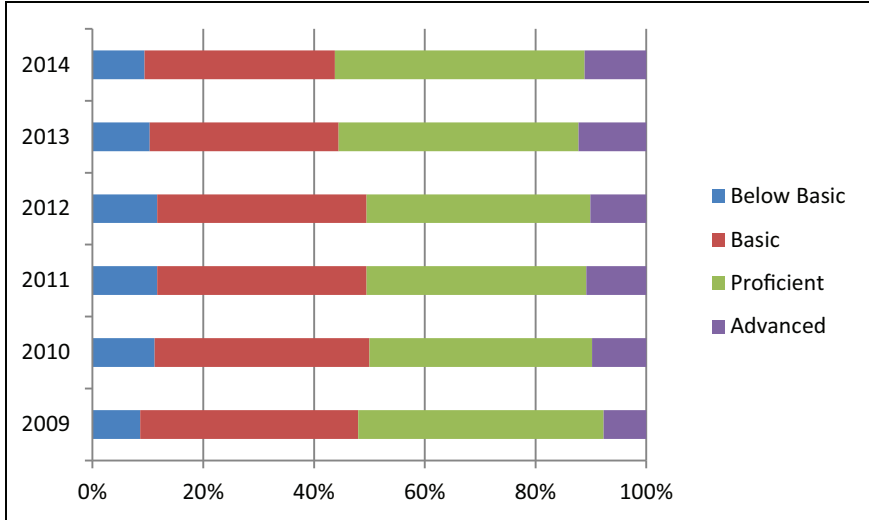


FIGURE F-3 (A-C) Percentage of students' scoring at each performance level by grade for DC CAS composition, 2007-2014.

SOURCE: Data from LearnDC at <http://www.learndc.org> [March 2015].



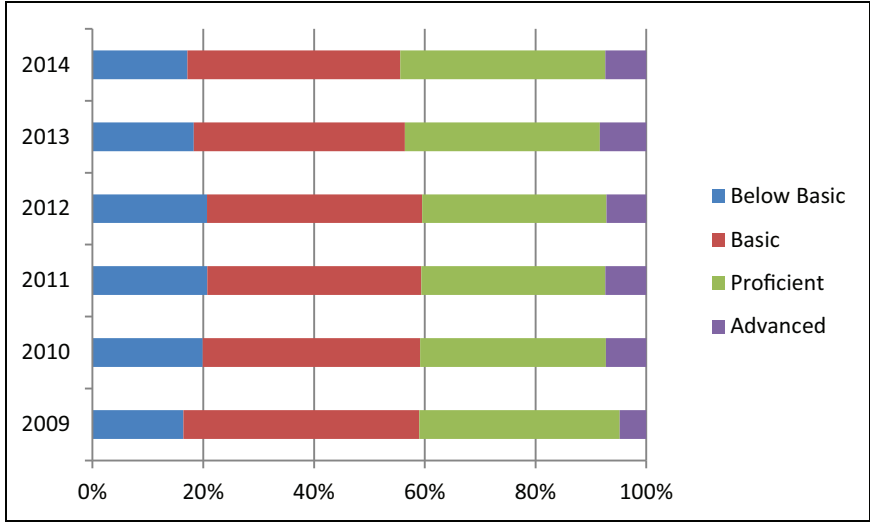
FIGURE F-3 Continued



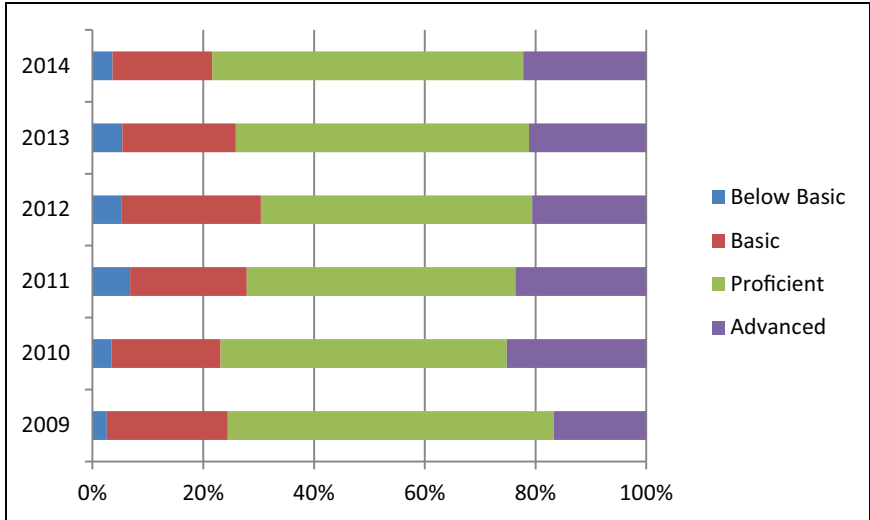
A Female.

FIGURE F-4 (A-I) Percentage at each performance level for student groups, summarized across grades: DC CAS reading.

SOURCE: Data from LearnDC at <http://www.learndc.org> [March 2015].

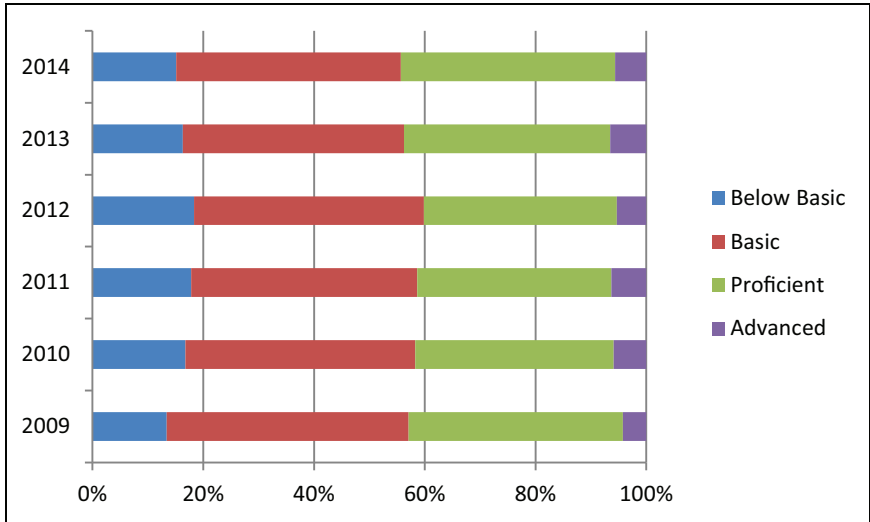


B Male.

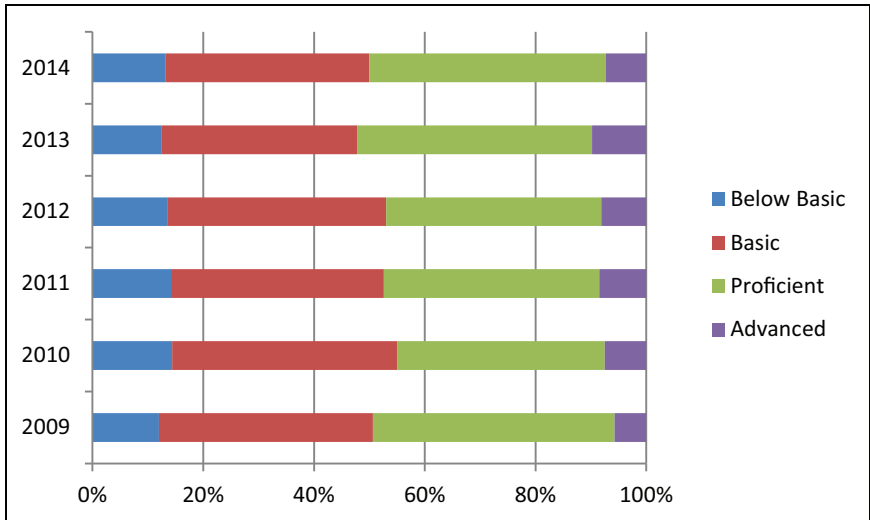


C Asian.

FIGURE F-4 Continued

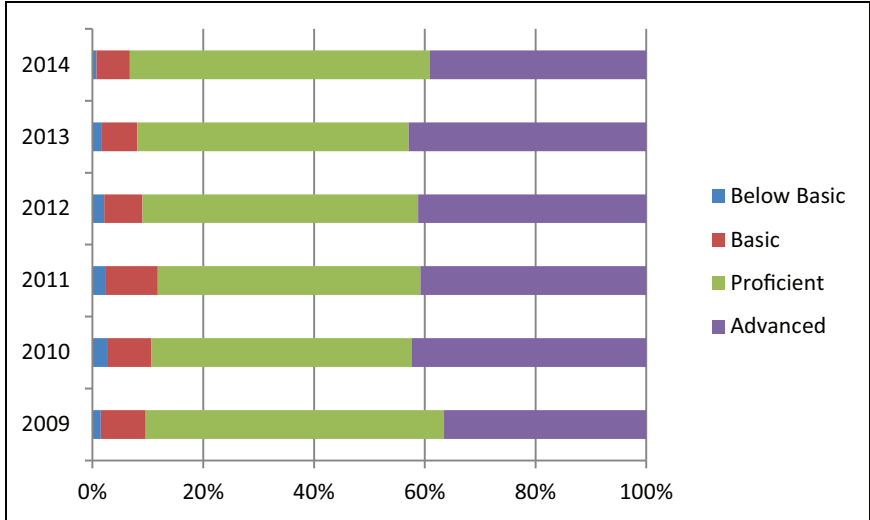


D African American.

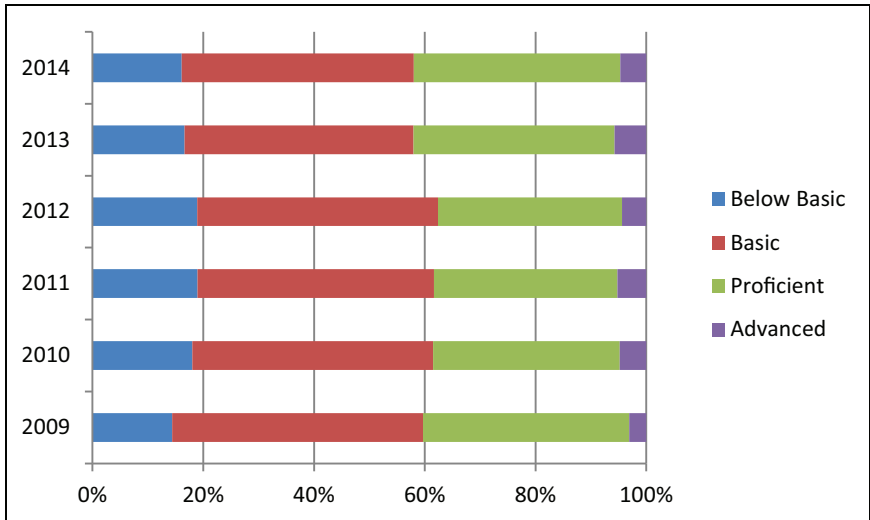


E Hispanic.

FIGURE F-4 Continued

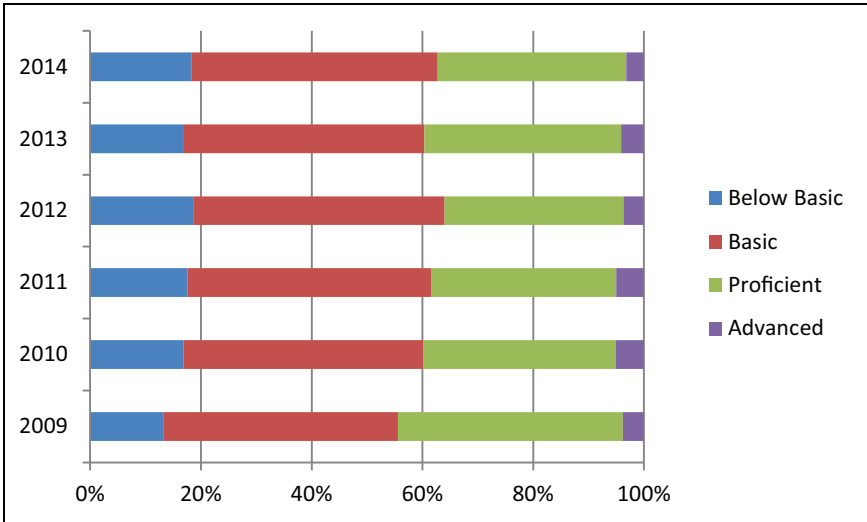


F White.

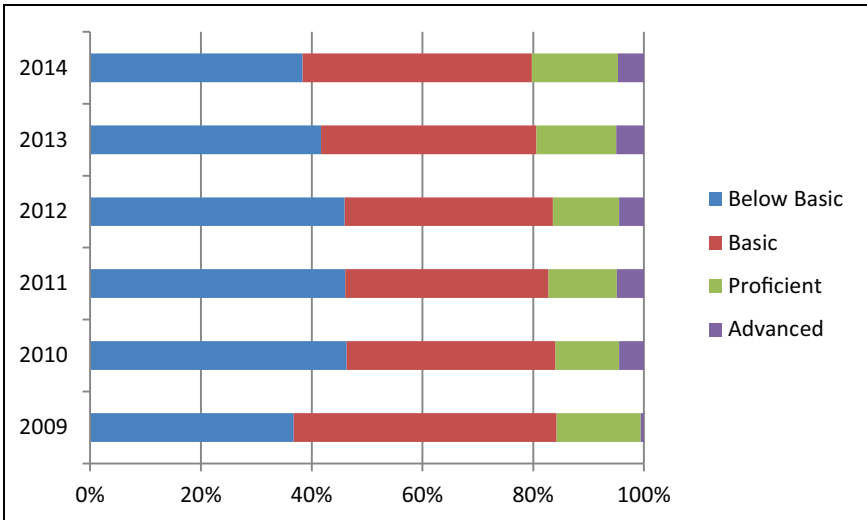


G Economically disadvantaged.

FIGURE F-4 Continued

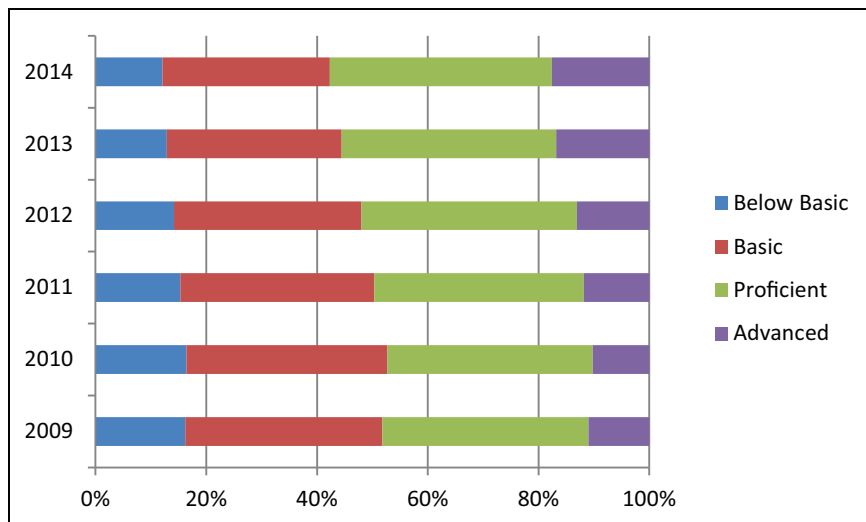


H English-language learner.



I Special education.

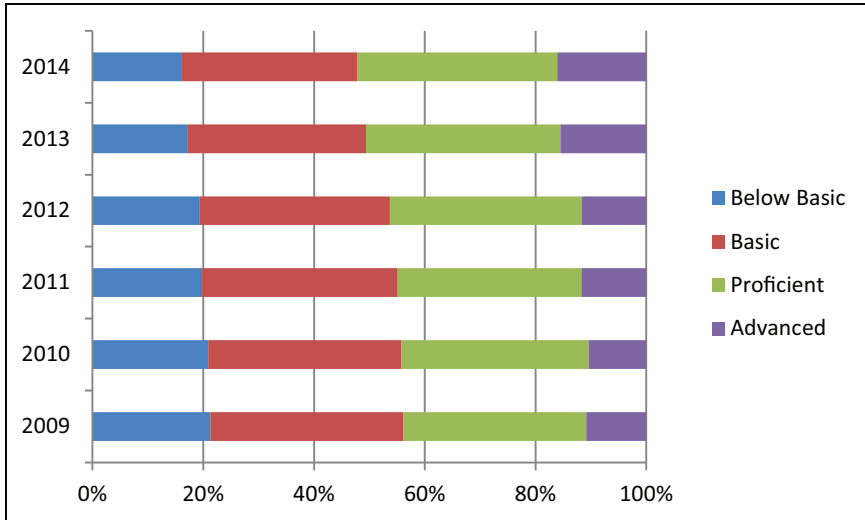
FIGURE F-4 Continued



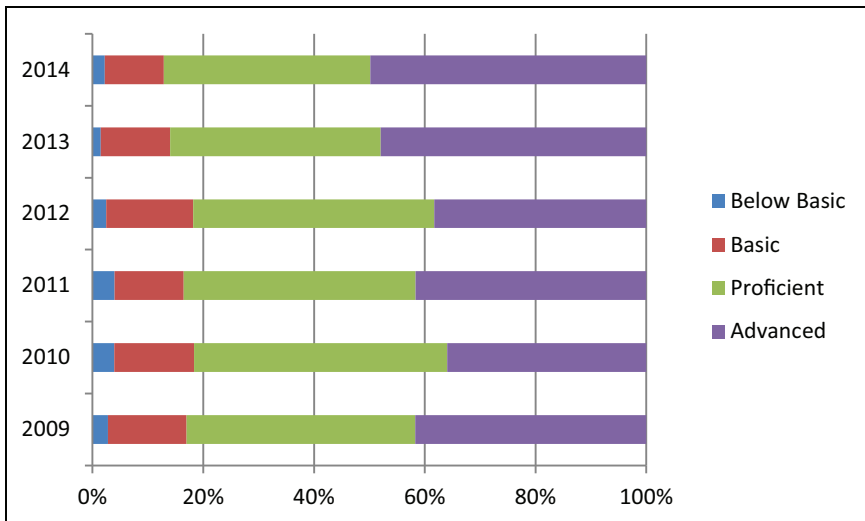
A Female.

FIGURE F-5 (A-I) Percentage at each performance level for student groups, summarized across grades: DC CAS math.

SOURCE: Data from LearnDC at <http://www.learndc.org> [March 2015].

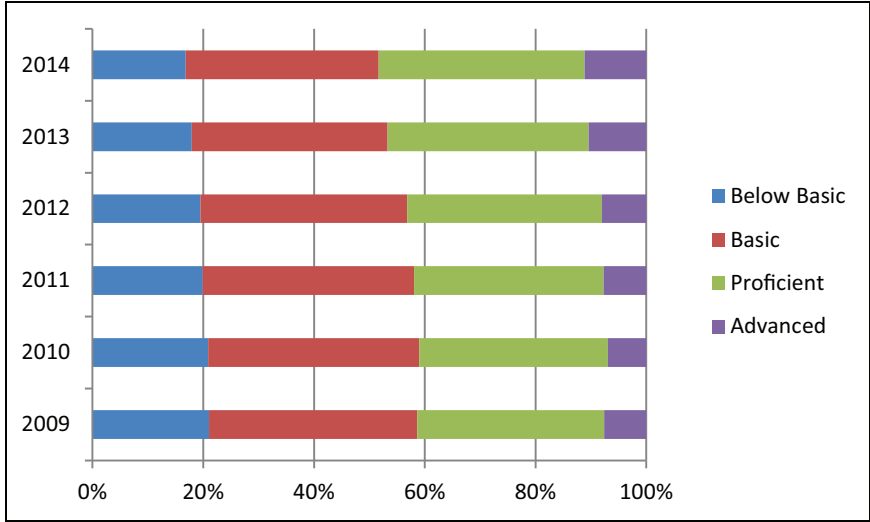


B Male.

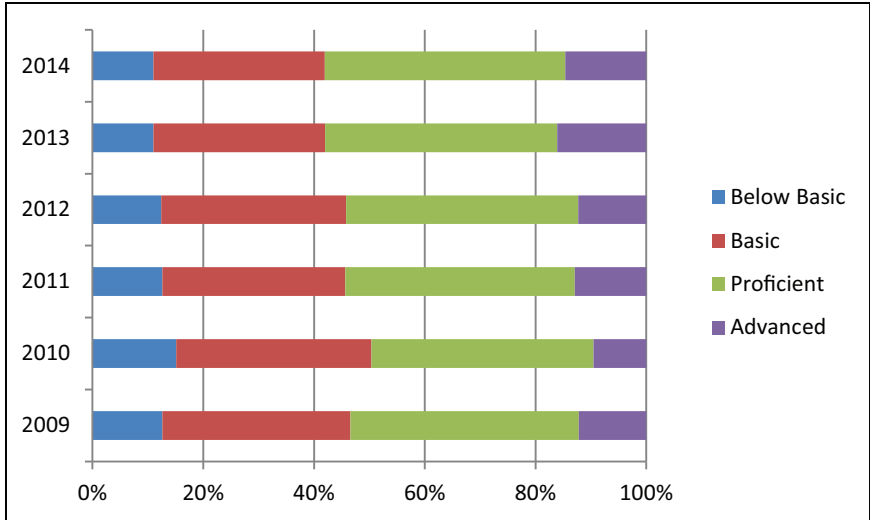


C Asian.

FIGURE F-5 Continued

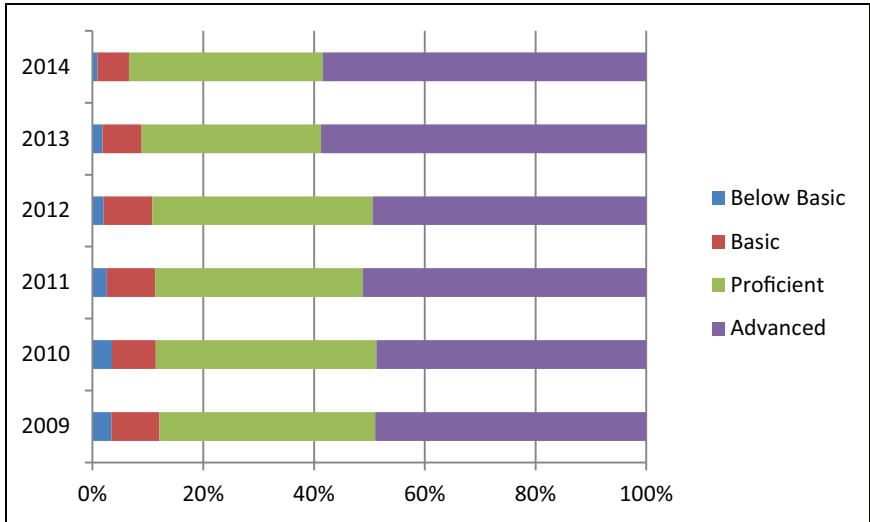


D African American.

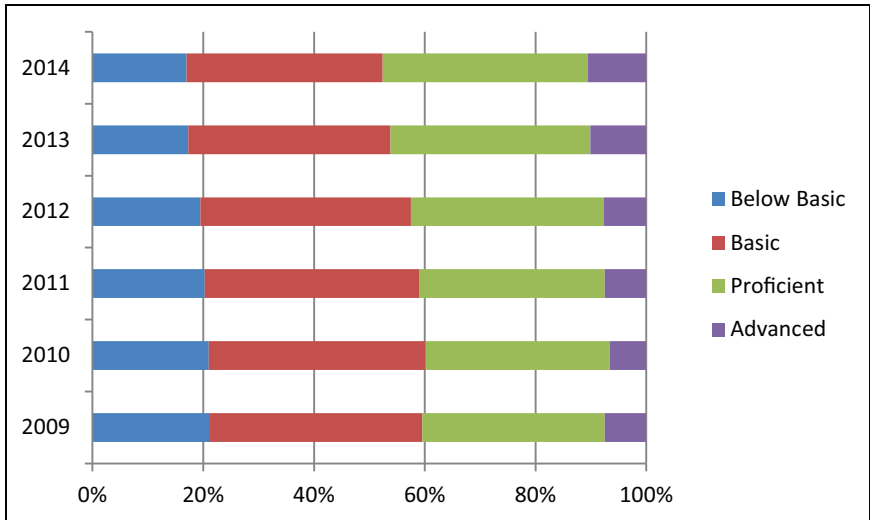


E Hispanic.

FIGURE F-5 Continued

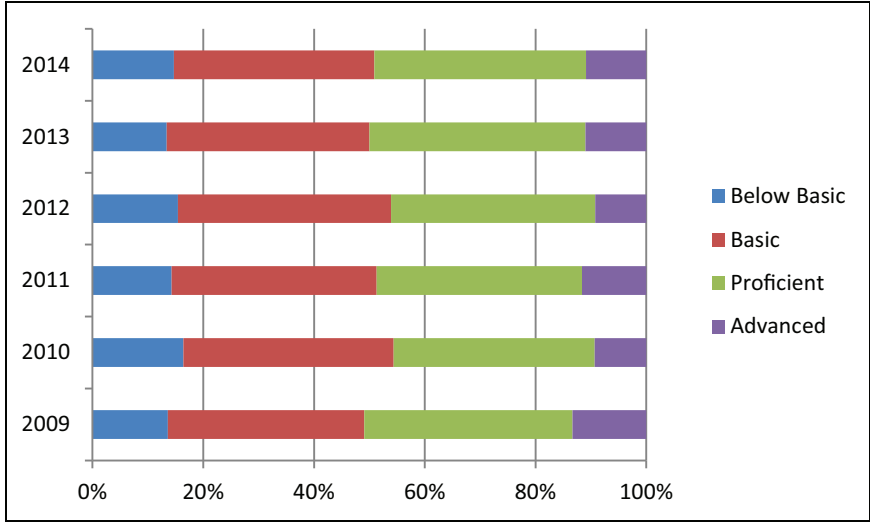


F White.

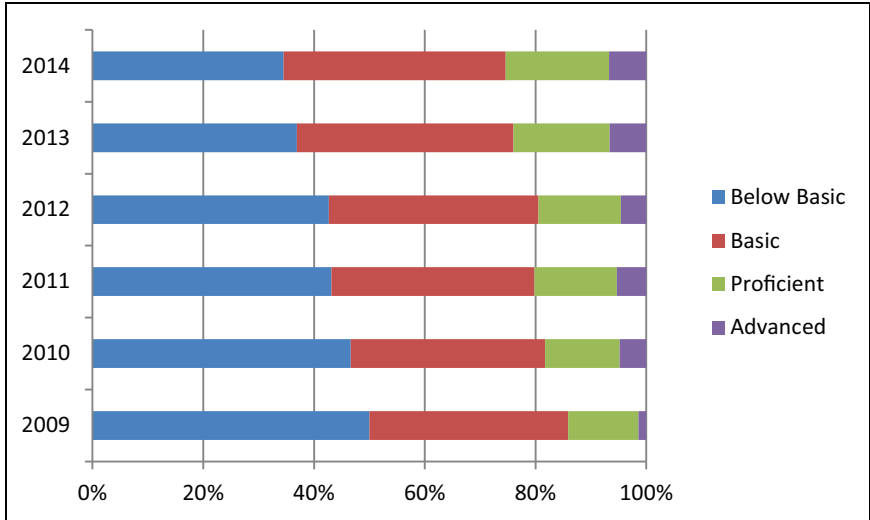


G Economically disadvantaged.

FIGURE F-5 Continued



H English-language learner.



I Special Education.

FIGURE F-5 Continued



## Appendix G

### Biographical Sketches of Committee Members and Staff

**Carl A. Cohn** (*cochair*) is director of the Urban Leadership Program and clinical professor of urban school leadership at Claremont Graduate University. Previously, he served in California as superintendent of schools in San Diego Unified School District and head of the Long Beach Unified School District. He has also served as a clinical professor at the University of Southern California and as the federal court monitor for the special education consent decree in the Los Angeles Unified School District. He serves on the boards of the American College Testing, Inc., the Freedom Writers Foundation, the Center for Reform of School Systems, and EdSource. He is a recipient of the Harold W. McGraw Prize in Education from the McGraw-Hill Research Foundation and of the Broad Prize for Urban Education from the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation. He has a B.A. in philosophy from St. John's College, an M.A. in counseling from Chapman University, and an Ed.D. in administrative and policy studies from the University of California, Los Angeles.

**Lorraine McDonnell** (*cochair*) is a professor of political science at the University of California at Santa Barbara (UCSB). Prior to joining UCSB, Lorraine McDonnell was a senior political scientist at RAND. Her research focuses on the politics of student testing, the design and implementation of educational reform initiatives, and the institutions of educational governance. In recent studies, she has examined the politics of student testing, particularly the curricular and political values underlying state assessment policies. Her publications have focused on various aspects of education policy and politics, including teacher unions, the education of immigrant

students, and the role of citizen deliberation. She served as president of the American Educational Research Association. She has a Ph.D. in political science from Stanford University.

**Alexandra Beatty** (*study director*) is a senior program officer for the Board on Testing and Assessment at the National Research Council (NRC). Her NRC work has included the first-phase evaluation of the District of Columbia Public Schools; studies of teacher preparation, of National Board certification for teachers, and of state-level science assessment; and studies by the Committee on Education Excellence and Testing Equity. Previously, she worked on the National Assessment of Educational Progress and College Board programs at the Educational Testing Service and as an independent education writer and researcher. She has a B.A. in philosophy from Williams College and an M.A. in history from Bryn Mawr College.

**Mark Dynarski** is the founder of and a researcher with Pemberton Research, LLC. Previously, he was the vice president and director of the Center for Improving Research Evidence at Mathematica. He also previously served as director of the What Works Clearinghouse at the Institute of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education and as director and principal investigator of numerous education programs with a focus on at-risk children and youth. His research interests focus on evidence-based policy, educational policy, school dropout programs, 21st-century after-school programs, and educational technology. His expertise covers econometrics and evaluation methodology, including the design, implementation, and analysis of evaluations of education programs using random assignment and quasi-experimental designs. He is a senior fellow in the Brookings Institution's Brown Center on Education Policy. He has a B.A. in economics from the State University of New York at Geneseo, and an M.A. and a Ph.D. in economics from the Johns Hopkins University and holds a B.A. in economics from the State University of New York at Geneseo.

**David N. Figlio** is director and a faculty fellow of the Institute for Policy Research, the Orrington Lunt professor of education and social policy, and a professor of human development and social policy and economics, all at Northwestern University. He is also a research associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research. His research covers a wide range of educational and tax issues, from school accountability and standards to welfare policy and policy design. His current research projects involve evaluating the largest school voucher program in the United States, conducting a large-scale study of school accountability, and following children from birth through their school career to study key questions regarding early childhood policy and inequality. He has served on many national education task

forces and panels and has advised several U.S. states and foreign nations on the design, implementation, and evaluation of educational policies. He has a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

**Judith A. Koenig** (*senior program officer*) is on the staff of the Board on Testing and Assessment of the National Research Council (NRC). At the NRC, she has directed measurement-related studies designed to inform education policy. Her work has included studies on the National Assessment for Educational Progress, teacher licensure and advanced-level certification, inclusion of special-needs students and English-language learners in assessment programs, setting standards for the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, assessing 21st-century skills, and using value-added methods for evaluating schools and teachers. Previously, she worked at the Association of American Medical Colleges and as a special education teacher and diagnostician. She has a B.A. in special education from Michigan State University, an M.A. in psychology from George Mason University, and a Ph.D. in educational measurement, statistics, and evaluation from the University of Maryland, College Park.

**Sharon J. Lewis** recently retired from her role as director of research for the Council of the Great City Schools in Washington, D.C., where she directed the council's research program, which contributes to the organization's efforts to improve teaching and learning in the nation's urban schools, as well as helps develop education policy. Previously, she was assistant superintendent of research, development, and coordination with the Detroit Public Schools, and she has also worked as a national education consultant. She has an M.A. in educational research from Wayne State University.

**Susanna Loeb** is the Barnett family professor of education at Stanford University, faculty director of the Center for Education Policy Analysis, and a codirector of Policy Analysis for California Education. She specializes in education policy, looking at policies and practices that support teachers and school leaders. Her work spans the range of age level, including early education, K-12, and higher education. Her recent work focuses on information barriers to teaching improvement and parenting. Loeb is a member of the National Board for Education Sciences, a senior fellow at the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research, and a member of the National Academy of Education. She holds a doctorate in economics and a master of public policy from the University of Michigan, and a bachelor's in political science and civil engineering from Stanford University.

**C. Kent McGuire** is president and CEO of the Southern Education Foundation. Previously, he served as dean of the College of Education and

professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Temple University and as senior vice president at Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. Earlier, he served in the Clinton administration as assistant secretary of education, focusing on research and development. He also previously was an education program officer at the Pew Memorial Trust and at the Eli Lilly Endowment. His current research interests focus on education administration and policy and organizational change. He has participated in a number of evaluation research initiatives on comprehensive school reform, education finance, and school improvement. He has a master's degree in education administration and policy from Teachers College at Columbia University and a doctorate in public administration from the University of Colorado Denver.

**Natalie Nielsen** (*acting director, Board on Testing and Assessment*) has directed numerous studies on K-12 education at the National Research Council (NRC), including those that produced the reports *Successful K-12 STEM Education: Identifying Effective Approaches in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics* and *Monitoring Progress Toward Successful STEM Education: A Nation Advancing?* Prior to her work at the NRC, she was the director of research at the Business-Higher Education Forum and a senior researcher at SRI International. She has also served as a staff writer for the American Association for the Advancement of Science's Project 2061, exhibit researcher at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History, and exhibit writer and internal evaluator at the San Diego Natural History Museum. She has a B.S. in geology from the University of California, Davis; an M.S. in geological sciences from San Diego State University; and a Ph.D. in education from George Mason University.

**Jenny Nagaoka** is the associate director for the Chicago Postsecondary Transition Project at the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago, which is a project of the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research. Previously, she was the project director of the Chicago Public School's Student Development Planning Initiative, a joint project with the University of Chicago and the Chapin Hall Center for Children. Her current work focuses on the preparation, skills, and support that students need to successfully make the transition from high school to college. She has also worked on the quality of classroom instruction, as well as an evaluation of Chicago Public School's summer program. She has a B.A. from Macalester College and a master of public policy degree from the Irving B. Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago.

**Marion Orr** is director of the A. Alfred Taubman Center for Public Policy and American Institutions and the Fred Lippitt professor of public policy,

political science, and urban studies at Brown University. Previously, he was a member of the political science faculty at Duke University. His research interests include American government and politics, urban politics, community organizing, urban public policy, and the politics of urban schools. His book, *Black Social Capital: The Politics of School Reform in Baltimore*, was awarded the Aaron Wildavsky Award for the best book published annually from the Policy Studies Organization and his book, *The Color of School Reform: Race, Politics and the Challenge of Urban Education*, was named the best book published annually by the Urban Politics Section of the American Political Science Association. He has an M.A. in political science from Atlanta University (now Clark-Atlanta University) and a Ph.D. in government and politics from the University of Maryland at College Park.

**Diana C. Pullin** is a professor of educational leadership and higher education and coordinates the Joint Degree Program in Law and Education at the Law School and the Lynch School of Education, both at Boston College. Previously, she served as dean of the School of Education at Boston College and as associate dean of the College of Education at Michigan State University. As a practicing attorney, scholar, and teacher, she has focused on the relationship between law and education in the pursuit of equality of educational opportunity and educational excellence. She has also worked on the development and implementation of ethical and professional standards of practice in education. She has a J.D. and a Ph.D. in education, both from the University of Iowa.

