



STATEMENT TO THE
PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION TEAM

President-elect Barack Obama
Vice-President Joseph Biden
Secretary of Education Designee Arne Duncan

Presented by

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Issue Topic:

PUBLIC EDUCATION
District of Columbia Public Schools



At the request of a member of President-elect Barack Obama's Presidential Transition Team/Education Transition Team this summary statement is forwarded.

PREFACE

The D. C. Public Schools has received serious national media and political attention over the past 18 months because of the mayoral takeover of the system and the appointment of an aggressive, reform-minded leader. The growing crises in the school district over the past two decades, especially in facilities disrepairs and seriously lagging student achievement, created a sense of urgency that has served as a justification for many of the recent political and financial decisions and fast-paced changes that are underway. Already, the DCPS takeover is being touted as a national model for other districts despite some emerging problems with current reform efforts.

Key Issues and Impacts

Further attention to key issues related to the DCPS reform efforts and a better understanding of the current and future impact of these issues is important for resolving growing local problems and improving opportunities for success both locally and nationally. Key issues to date are:

1. Lack of adequate parent and community engagement and due process in making critical decisions and implementing new policies and changes:

- o parents shut out of hearings and official meetings by inconvenient scheduling practices such as simultaneous hearings across the city and inconvenient start times, locations with limited public transportation access, and limited involvement of key policy makers;



- o regular violation of legal notifications, reporting and public commentary regulations;
- o little or no information sharing with parents regarding their own children as well as system changes like school closures, K-8 grade alignment, etc.

2. Lack of accountability structures and political access to help resolve problems:

- o changeover in school board to state advisory board eliminates parent problem resolution options related to local schools;
- o confusing and contradictory governance and accountability relationships between DCPS leadership, Office of State Superintendent, Deputy Mayor for Education, City Council, and charter schools;
- o abundance of inexperienced central office and school administrators

3. Poor planning and implementation caused by expedited timelines and inadequate attention to details:

- o sloppy school renovations that will have to be corrected
- o lack of attention to school consolidation issues like conflicting school and neighborhood cultures, adequate staff parking, increased neighborhood and gang violence, combining faculties with differing roles, etc.

4. K-8 alignment problems:

- o structural problems with restrooms, water fountains, cafeterias, etc.
- o lack of security support from MPD and protections for younger students, such as procedures for separating older/younger students entering and exiting buildings



- o questions regarding professional staff skills to deal with older/younger students simultaneously

5. Disciplinary/behavior issues

- o inconsistent disciplinary and suspension procedures between schools
- o increased violence and gang incidences
- o lack of adequate wrap-around services

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