



Office of the State Superintendent of Education
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
MAYOR ADRIAN M. FENTY

TEACHER QUALITY HEARING

Prepared Written Testimony for

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State Superintendent

Office of the State Superintendent of Education

The Honorable Florence Shapiro, Chair

Texas State Senate Committee on Education

Capitol Extension, Room E1.028

Tuesday, July 20, 2010

9:00 AM

Good morning, madam chair and members of the Committee. My name is Kerri Briggs, State Superintendent of Education for the District of Columbia. It is an honor to be here to testify before the Texas State Senate Committee on Education. I am a native Texan, so it is always good to be back home.

I would like to recognize and thank you for having this hearing to discuss teacher quality. None of us sitting here today can deny the importance of a quality teaching workforce for our kids. I believe, and many studies bear out, that an effective teacher may be the single most important determinant in student learning that education leaders have control over.

Background—DC Education Reform

Before I get started, I would like to provide some background on the education reform initiative in DC so that you have more of a perspective on my role and the role of my agency. Education reform is a high priority for Mayor Adrian Fenty and the District, and I have the unique pleasure of leading the Office of the State Superintendent of Education.

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education, or OSSE for short, is a fairly new agency. When the Mayor received authority over DC schools in 2007, he created a separate agency, OSSE, to oversee and manage state-level education functions, and operate in the same way as other state education agencies. OSSE works with 58 school districts in DC – the traditional DC Public Schools and 55 public charter school districts. In our “city-state” status, we are pretty small – 75,000 students with about 40% of those students attending public charter schools. Another point about DC that I know you’ll be able to appreciate – our work is governed by a principle of local control. The nature of mayoral control over DCPS and the theory of action behind our highly robust public charter school sector means that the state actions must be taken with our local leaders.

Since the Mayor took control of the schools, we have seen a surge in the number of people who want to be part of the city's education reform efforts, from teachers and administrators to philanthropic organizations. This passion to better serve and educate our students has drawn people from all over the country to DC, including myself. The District's Race to the Top proposal to the US Department of Education and the recent Washington Teachers' Union contract are changing the way we think about teacher quality. Our Race to the Top proposal is driving DC's teacher reform efforts with initiatives focusing on high-quality pathways, improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance, and ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals. In addition, with the approval of the DCPS contract with the union, teachers will be eligible for individual performance pay. It was also agreed upon during contract negotiations that principals will now have more control over the staffing decisions within their schools.

But we know that recruiting and retaining teaching professionals are difficult tasks, especially in our urban districts. Today, I would like to focus my testimony on DC's efforts to

- increase the quantity and quality of the teacher talent pool,
- evaluate the effectiveness of our teachers, and
- motivate and support quality teachers.

Active Recruitment

While many are attracted to DC and come to the city to join the teaching workforce, we also understand the need to go after talent instead of waiting for talent to come to us. As part of our recruitment efforts, the state completely overhauled requirements for teacher licensure and approved new standards for post-baccalaureate, non-degree educator preparation programs. As a result of these changes, qualified non-profit organizations and local educational agencies are able to develop alternative state-approved educator preparation programs for teachers.

Given DC's scale, we believe that a high proportion of DC teachers will be alternatively certified. We also believe that the use of alternative routes to certification will lead to more teachers meeting the revised licensure requirements.

Last year, the state approved three (3) alternative certification programs, including The New Teacher Project, Center for Inspired Teaching, and Teach For America. Our agency has a number of criteria for "alternative route to certification", including:

- being selective in accepting candidates,
- providing supervised, school-based experiences and ongoing support,
- significantly limiting the amount of coursework required or have options to test out of courses, and
- upon completion, awarding the same level of certification as traditional preparation programs.

These alternative certification programs establish networks for teachers and provide them with continued support, thereby motivating them to remain in the profession. Generally speaking, DC does not experience teacher shortages that other urban districts face. But we must take steps to ensure that we maintain a quality teaching workforce. We believe that the alternative certification route criteria, coupled with the new licensure standards will continue to produce a talented pool of quality teachers.

Evaluating Effectiveness

In terms of evaluating the effectiveness of our teaching workforce, DC is committed to a common growth measure for all of our teachers. We are in a strong position to act on data about persistently ineffective teachers since all LEAs—both DCPS and public charter LEAs—are able to make persistently ineffective teachers subject to termination. For DCPS, the data

that we use is based on a new performance measurement system: IMPACT at DC Public Schools. Charter Schools, as a system, are rolling out the use of a school-based tool, the Performance Management Framework, which will establish a foundation upon which they can build individual teacher systems.

IMPACT, launched last year in DC Public Schools, is a nationally-recognized teacher performance evaluation system that uses multiple measures to assess teaching effectiveness and identify highly effective teachers. IMPACT generates an overall score for teacher effectiveness

- by using a value-added student growth measure;
- based on observed measures of teacher performance;
- by measuring a teacher's contribution to the school community, and
- based on the school's overall growth in achievement.

Charter schools are at a variety of different points in their evolution on human capital systems. Some have developed high-quality systems, while others have very limited human capital systems. We hope to use RTTT funds to support districts in building systems that meet critical human capital evaluation needs, including the potential facilitation of the collaborative development of systems that serve a consortia of LEAs to provide more effective workforce management. As participating LEAs, charters will use their evaluation systems to drive key personnel decisions.

The Performance Management Framework was introduced last year by the Public Charter School Board, DC's public charter school authorizer. The Performance Management Framework is a system for evaluating school-level performance with a weighting of at least 50% based on student academic performance. It was designed to give the Public Charter School Board information about school-level performance. It does this by comparing a student's growth

relative to what is needed to reach proficiency. Our public charter schools use this evaluation system, along with the school's accountability plan, to annually evaluate its school leader.

Both IMPACT and the Performance Management Framework have raised the importance of accountability for our teachers and school leaders, creating a culture that puts student achievement first. In our Race to the Top application, the District committed to robust evaluation systems for teachers and principals. Specifically we made the commitment that by next fall, 100% of participating LEAs would achieve this goal by implementing teacher evaluation systems that meet the following requirements:

- Student growth counts for at least 50% of a teacher's evaluation
- Includes multiple measures for performance besides the growth measure above
- Divides effectiveness into four tiers (e.g., highly effective, effective, minimally effective, ineffective)
- Is conducted annually
- Is used to inform human capital decisions

The good news for us is that many of these strategies are already underway in our school districts. The challenge that lies ahead is to combine efforts and create one evaluation system for all DC teachers. DC will try to leverage Race to the Top funding to meet the goal of a common growth measure for all of our teachers. Thirty-five LEAs signed on to the District's Race to the Top application and committed to measuring student growth with a common, statewide growth measure to be determined later this year. What this means is that 91% of DC students will be enrolled in schools where teachers and school leaders are evaluated using a common growth measure. This is an important step for DC as it will ensure that close to all of our teachers are evaluated equally based on the common growth measure.

Support and Motivation

Evaluating teacher effectiveness is equally as important as motivating and incentivizing quality teachers to stay within the profession. It cannot be overstated that many first year teachers

move on to higher-paying jobs outside of the profession because they were not motivated and supported by their principal or school. Non-profit education organizations such as Teach For America are known for their established network of teachers and education leaders. These teachers are recruited for some of the toughest districts in the country. Yet they are motivated and supported by their core network to face challenges and overcome them while remaining focused on student achievement. While we see a number of support networks through non-profit organizations, we also see supports at the school level.

DCPS and public charter schools have different ways of providing support for teachers and leaders. DCPS uses evaluations to inform professional development for its teachers. The Teaching and Learning Framework defines what effective teaching looks like and is grounded in research-based best practices. IMPACT provides actionable feedback based on the Teaching and Learning Framework so that all teachers can be directed to targeted professional development that meets individual needs. This individualized approach is further supported through the use of Master Educators and instructional coaches.

DCPS has plans in place to use Master Educators to provide individualized coaching based on IMPACT evaluations. Master Educators specialize in a content area and can provide content-specific evaluation and professional development. DC will try to leverage Race to the Top funding to continue to support this initiative. Similar to Master Educators, DC Public Schools has hired instructional coaches for every school to support teacher development.

Some districts are able to tailor their support, mentoring and coaching framework to fit the unique needs of their instructional corps. For example, a relatively new teaching corps may benefit from partnership with an alternative pipeline provider that includes a solid mentoring component, while more experienced teachers may develop better through a program with a local university or subject-matter expert organization that is able to refine and further build upon existing skills.

Also, some of our LEAs utilize each other's resources or create a collaborative to accomplish shared goals. It is not uncommon to see LEAs come together to sponsor a job fair to recruit for their schools, or collaborate on a teacher training pipeline. One concept that is very common among our LEAs is the idea of cultivating leaders within a school and promoting them to leadership positions as the school expands. Many teachers are drawn to districts because of the opportunities to grow with the school. They see how their work directly impacts student achievement, and thus school expansion. We see this happening often, for example when a school starts out as K-6 and expands to open a middle school, led by a former teacher or administrator from the elementary school. Our LEAs work hard to identify talent from within their ranks and to cultivate individuals for future leadership positions.

I strongly believe that if DC continues to provide support to teachers through opportunities for growth, targeted professional development, and networks with shared goals, then we will see increases in the retention rates throughout the city. I also believe that with our continued efforts to recruit for the teaching profession, we will see more quality candidates that meet our requirements for licensure and new standards. In addition, with one common growth measure, we will see greater equity among DC teachers for evaluation purposes.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions you have.