



Brianne K. Nadeau

— Councilmember, Ward 1 —

Policy Priorities for Education and Youth

The following is one of a series of working policy documents crafted in a collaborative process of Community Conversations, door-to-door canvassing, community office hours and input from issue-area experts.

Overview

I believe that all young people in the District's public schools deserve high-quality instruction and training in facilities that are safe, modern and inclusive of state-of-the-art instructional technology. As Councilmember, I am fighting for well-funded, highly-resourced schools with dedicated, well-trained professionals determined to prepare all public students for college, careers and productive citizenship.

I believe that our schools should help our children thrive and perform competently. When performance is consistently low, teachers and principals must work together to diagnose the reasons and make corrections in their programs to adapt to the needs of their students. I am focusing attention in particular on providing struggling students with the resources they need to achieve success. Through community partnerships, wraparound services such as healthcare, counseling and mental healthcare, tutoring and mentoring can be made more available in our schools. We must embrace our families and give them the tools they need to support their students. We must closely monitor the physical condition and operating budgets of Ward 1 public schools (and their feeder schools in other wards), as well as student performance and parental satisfaction at each school. The District needs the full attention and engagement of all its stakeholders if we are to achieve our goal of preparing all our students for college, careers and a full productive role in family, community and life.

As Councilmember, I am working with residents and our elected Ward 1 School Board Representative Laura Wilson Phelan to identify priorities for education and youth, understand what data and evidence exists regarding models that address challenges, build and implement interventions tailored to those needs, continuously assess what works and what does not, and invest accordingly. I am committed to examining common themes I'm hearing from students, parents, residents and non-profits and developing strategies that resolve systemic challenges in the long term.

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How the District and Ward 1 can achieve these goals

The following are strategies and policies that the Councilmember will implement both through oversight and legislative action, to begin to tackle the gaps.

Core Issue: Young people perform better when the ‘whole child’ and ‘whole family’ are supported via wraparound services and the Community Schools Model.

Opportunity: Students can be better served by ensuring that their basic human needs are met, that their home life is healthy and stable and that they have the opportunity to participate in positive youth development activities that complement their school day experience. Community Schools turn public schools into hubs for students and the larger community by developing partnerships with community organizations and bringing services into the school, such as health care or adult literacy. There are currently six grantees (at 11 schools) operating Community School partnerships in the District, but the model should be expanded to all high-poverty schools. Home visits are beneficial and consist of instruction in child development and health, referrals for service, or social and emotional support. High-quality evidence-based programs like the Nurse Family Partnership and Parents as Teachers not only improve student success, but also have a net positive cost-benefit.

Oversight and Legislative Action: (1) Provide funding for a Coordinator on-site to increase collaboration with parents and community; (2) Prioritize data collection and evaluation of community/school partnership models as they grow; (3) Expand the number of high-quality early childhood learning or childcare programs; (4) Support District funding for programs that support parents and young children such as home visitation projects, parenting programs and quality early childhood learning and childcare programs; (5) support funding for more Community Schools; (6) Identify opportunities to increase partnerships between schools and community-based organizations; (7) Celebrate the successes of Ward 1 schools and draw Ward 1 residents, both community and school families, into their schools; (8) Ensure that the District continues to improve coordination among District agencies working with children and that critical information is shared appropriately across agencies; (9) Ensure the voices of Ward 1 families are represented within the District.

Core Issue: Parental engagement is essential to the success of students and schools.

Opportunity: Student academic achievement and social/emotional development can be improved by advancing effective collaboration between families and educators through school and community-based partnerships. To increase the voice of families in the education of their children, D.C. has made some progress through teacher training and professional development on parent engagement. These strategies are proving incredibly effective in a handful of high-poverty schools. These programs should be brought to scale with increased partnerships and effective funding.

Oversight and Legislative Action: (1) Support an ample budget for greater community and parental engagement in DCPS; (2) Increase local funding to organizations that perform home visits as part of parent engagement; (3) Require parent centers in schools; (4) Encourage Ward 1

charter schools to participate in joint parental engagement events with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) and DCPS.

Core Issue: Funding should be dedicated to support at-risk students, making maximum effort to keep kids in school and on track.

Opportunity: The District has an estimated 5,000 children in need of mental health services. The number of homeless students has increased 60% since 2009 and continues to grow. Our at-risk children lead complicated lives, often moving frequently, some changing schools multiple times during the school year. These students face specific risks, are subject to disruption and trauma and require specific and targeted support to ensure their academic functioning does not decline due to housing or family instability. There should be a focus on students who are struggling behaviorally, recognizing that they are the last students we want to see pushed out of the classroom. Children with socio-emotional needs and their families often receive services from multiple District agencies, but a lack of information sharing across agencies can mean that efforts are duplicated, unnecessarily re-started and problems facing the child and family not fully understood by the various agencies working with them. It is important that DC government agencies share data with one another on the children and families they are serving.

Oversight and Legislative Action: (1) Initiate and expand programs that support socio-emotional learning in school to help students successfully manage issues that may impede their educational progress; (2) Support a restorative justice approach to school discipline that addresses underlying causes of poor behavior; (3) Support research-based truancy interventions instead of court referral; (4) Increase the availability of school social workers and psychologists; (5) Expand use of the Primary Project; (6) Expand the use of Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PIBS) to all schools; (7) Increase funding to OSSE McKinney Vento Statewide Liaison's office for additional staff to conduct outreach and training to school-based liaisons and/or to increase the McKinney Vento sub-grant funding to schools with high concentrations of homeless students; (8) Explore alternative uses for McKinney Vento Federal Funds to address the challenges of students and families facing homelessness; (9) Initiate a parent outreach/awareness raising campaign to educate parents on the school-based resources available if/when their families are experiencing homelessness; (10) Expand MOU's between OSSE and sister agencies using the SLED data system which is well positioned to provide cross sector data collection that can be securely shared; (11) Continue to streamline case management across agencies; (12) support funding for extended-day and extended-year initiatives as well as for career-tech training and internship programs and alternative programs for disengaged youth.

Core Issue: Coordination of services and transparency at both DCPS and the District's charter schools must be increased.

Opportunity: The District now is among the highest spending school systems in the nation, yet we fail to achieve the results we want for all our students. Both DCPS and many charter schools have popular programs with long waiting lists, while some schools are barely able to reach enrollments large enough to justify their continued operation. DCPS and charter schools have not shared successes and replicated or brought to scale those programs that have proven effective with specific populations. There is a lack of transparency in our public school accounting and a failure to provide the public with transparent financial data that would explain per-pupil-

spending (as distinct from per-pupil-funding). The District should do more to outline a clear process to monitor the use of its educational dollars, both operating and capital, at the school level to promote the implementation of effective programs. Greater transparency would enable OSSE and the Deputy Mayor for Education to make appropriate decisions about the distribution of available vacant properties, the use and oversight of federal monies, and appropriate and equitable distribution and use of “at-risk,” special education and English Language Learners funds.

Oversight and Legislative action: (1) Develop legislation that would require transparency of financial records and reporting of per-pupil-spending of both DCPS and the charter schools; (2) Develop and support legislation that requires DCPS, charter schools, and their management companies to conform to District facilities accounting; (3) Appoint members to the Public Charter School Board with expertise in public accounting who can continue the efforts made through the CHARM report, with a focus on making financial reporting across charter LEAs consistent and easily understandable by the public; (4) Meet regularly with education advisory/advocacy groups and the leadership of each Ward 1 DCPS school; (5) Encourage and support the formation of a ward-wide education council with membership including both Ward 1 DCPS and charter schools administrators and families; (6) Showcase successful programs in both DCPS and charter schools.

Core Issue: Adult education and lifelong learning must be supported and expanded.

Opportunity: For District residents, workforce development training and classes are free at the University of the District of Columbia Community College, yet only 4% of students enrolled in workforce training at UDC-CC live in Ward 1. More must be done to engage residents over the age of 24 in UDC’s instruction and training opportunities. At the same time, UDC-CC Workforce Development needs a consistent stream of dedicated resources to provide programming that better serves the diversity of our ward. For many residents, whether it’s their first job or a mid-career position, it is important to have certified and quality learning opportunities that provide a credential. From project management to grant writing to information technology training, motivated residents need affordable and convenient places to get new skills for the digital economy.

Oversight and Legislative Action: (1) Expand Adult Education/Workforce Development opportunities for people over the age of 24; (2) Support continuing education and professional development for residents with a college degree; (3) Connect District institutions that provide adult and vocational education to expand instruction to prepare and sustain people’s professional skills; (4) Advocate for recreational learning opportunities for residents of all ages; (5) Support effective outreach programs that ensure residents know of the quality and availability of District services; (6) Examine the potential of a Senior College to provide classes, evening lectures and semester-long courses; (7) Support programs that integrate visits to D.C.’s museums and other cultural landmarks.

Core issue: The DCPS facilities modernization process must be transparent and dependable.

Opportunity: Numerous Ward 1 DCPS schools have been scheduled to receive modernization, only to be bumped back on the District-wide construction schedule and to see their modernization budget directed to other schools. These Ward 1 schools are crowded, have growing enrollments and fail to meet ADA standards, yet they have been delayed for years. While DCPS is about halfway through its modernization task and has made enormous strides, distrust remains. The Council should require DCPS and the Department of General Services (DGS) to establish transparent processes and make information accessible to enable the public to understand how project priorities and criteria are set. These processes must be developed in partnership with parent and community groups to enable DCPS and DGS to have a full understanding of why the current system does not work for those who really “own” the schools: the neighborhood constituencies.

Oversight and Legislative Action: (1) Require planning and Capital Improvement Plan documents be made available to the public; (2) reinstate the Modernization Advisory Commission to propose a better, understandable and fairer process for tackling the remaining modernization sites.

Core Issue: School days should be expanded effectively and efficiently.

Opportunity: DC public schools and charters have, in recent years, begun to experiment with an ‘extended day,’ adding on an additional 60 or 90 minutes to the day for additional academic instruction. Additional academic instruction has value and must ensure access to youth development afterschool programming that keeps children engaged for up to 3 ½ additional hours beyond the traditional day (in essence, until parents are done at work). Many communities have opted to increase the length of their school day to 6 or 6:30 p.m. through intentional partnerships between schools and community-based organizations.

Oversight and Legislative action: (1) Increase funding to community-based organizations partnering with schools; (2) Expand OSSE’s work to develop data sharing MOU’s with these providers; (3) Fund evaluation projects to determine which programs reap the greatest academic, health and social-emotional gains; (4) Provide incentives for schools to establish these partnerships (i.e., fund an after-school coordinator to establish partners and manage those relationships) at all schools.