



Washington Teachers' Union

Amplifying the Voice of DC Teachers

Elizabeth A. Davis, President

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Dear Councilmember:

I am writing to you as a DCPS educator and as president of the Washington Teachers' Union to ask you to help ensure that we have the ability to offer world class educational opportunities to each and every student, regardless of race, ethnicity, immigration status or economic circumstance.

Recent discussions indicate there is new interest among Council members in addressing one of the significant obstacles limiting the ability to achieve that goal within the District of Columbia Public Schools.

I urge you to amend DC Municipal Regulation 1-617.18 to allow educators and work together to create a teacher evaluation system that supports effective teaching and learning. Research shows that the current evaluation system, called IMPACT, is dysfunctional and has become a barrier to ensuring that DCPS students receive educational opportunities that serve them best. Yet, DC 1-617.18 prevents DCPS educators, represented by the Washington Teachers' Union, from contributing to the design of a better system.

The negative effect that the IMPACT system is having on public education in DC is reaching crisis proportions and unless we address it immediately, I am afraid it will be extremely difficult for DCPS to make up the ground it has lost toward reaching the goal of overall excellence.

For example, survey after survey shows that IMPACT is the leading cause of the District's tragically high rate of teacher turnover. Every year, we lose some of DC's [best educators to other school districts](#). This has created an unstable learning environment for thousands of DC students who are prevented from developing the long term relationships with educators that lead to improved learning and performance.

Moreover, from the time IMPACT was adopted, the performance gap between students living in economically disadvantaged homes and their more affluent peers [has widened, not narrowed](#).

Furthermore, the existence of IMPACT [has contributed to mistaken characterizations of educational progress in DCPS schools, and has thus made addressing real problems more difficult](#).

It has become increasingly clear that the IMPACT system has created an environment that made inevitable the grading and graduation scandals of last year (see these *Washington Post* articles: [A](#)

[new D.C. schools scandal](#) and [Before graduation scandal at D.C.'s Ballou, teachers sounded alarm.](#))

Jason Kamras, the architect of IMPACT, has disavowed it, saying that it does little but “create a culture of fear.” [‘A culture of fear’: How the teacher evaluation system Richmond’s new superintendent created impacted D.C. schools \(and why he won’t bring it here\)](#)

Experts who have examined the IMPACT system have found that it relies on very subjective metrics to evaluate teachers and on attempting to quantify certain indicators that are qualitative in nature and then mischaracterizing them as “data.”

It has become a given that the most effective way to address issues such as those created by IMPACT is collaboratively. This is in keeping with provisions of the WTU-DCPS Collective Bargaining Agreement mandating that educational policies and programs be designed through a “Full and Equal Partnership” between DCPS and the WTU (see Article 2 – Quality Education).

That’s why I urge you to work to amend DC 1-617.18 to allow for a collaborative approach to designing a teacher evaluation system that works.

Yours Excellence in Education,



Elizabeth A. Davis,
WTU President