District of Columbia
Office of the State Superintendent of Education

An Excellent Teacher for Every Child

District of Columbia Plan
to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators
August, 2015

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Acting State Superintendent of Education

This plan responds to Education Secretary Arne Duncan's July 7, 2014, letter to SEAs, as augmented with additional guidance published on November 10, 2014. The District of Columbia's plan complies with (1) the requirement in Section 1111(b)(8)(C) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that each state's Title I, Part A plan include information on the specific steps that the SEA will take to ensure that students from low-income families, students of color, and students with special needs are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers, and the measures that the agency will use to evaluate and publicly report the progress of the agency with respect to such steps; and (2) the requirement in ESEA Section 1111(e)(2) that a state's plan be revised by the SEA if necessary.

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Section 1: Introduction

One of the most persistent and challenging policy issues facing the U.S. education system is the discrepant levels of performance that can be found between subgroups of the country's student population, whether comparisons are made based on race/ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status. These discrepancies, commonly referred to as "achievement gaps," continue to persist despite promising reform efforts across the country.

In the District of Columbia (the District), the most significant achievement gaps are those that correlate with poverty, race, and neighborhood. In 2013, National Assessment of Educational Performance (NAEP) assessment results revealed that the District maintains significant achievement gaps between white and African American students.[1] Although the District has made great strides in raising overall student achievement, the widening achievement gap requires targeted action.

Upon implementation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Waiver in 2012, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) and the District's Local Education Agencies (LEAs) have taken multiple steps to improve the District's lowest performing schools and to close the achievement gap. However, it is clear that despite these efforts, more work needs to be done to specifically address teacher effectiveness in our highest need schools.

Effective teachers have an enormous impact on the lives of students. Research shows that teachers are the most important "within-school" influence on student achievement[2]. As such, ensuring student access to effective teachers can potentially be the most powerful tool in addressing the achievement gap. Without equitable access to great teachers and leaders for all students, any education reform effort will be unsuccessful.

Unfortunately, recent data from the U.S. Department of Education suggests that minority students across the country are more likely to be taught by teachers who are not fully certified, and by teachers who are in their first year of teaching.[3] In addition, recent research commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education revealed that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds do not have the same access to effective teaching as others. The study looked at 29 large school districts from multiple states and found that disadvantaged students systematically have less access to effective teachers. On average, reported value-added scores from state assessments for English Language Arts (ELA) teachers of low-poverty students were ranked in the 56th percentile, while teachers of high poverty students were in the 47th percentile.[4]

Access to Great Teachers in DC

The District of Columbia is at the forefront of innovation and rigor in developing policies to improve teacher quality. In 2009, the District of Columbia's largest LEA, the DC Public Schools (DCPS), instituted a multi-measure, high-stakes evaluation system for the district's nearly 7,000 teachers, school leaders, and other school-based staff members that are recognized as one of

the most rigorous teacher evaluation frameworks in the nation. IMPACT was designed to help individual staff and the district as a whole become more effective by: outlining clear performance expectations tailored to staff members' job responsibilities; providing quality feedback and support; providing performance data to facilitate high-quality, differentiated professional development and informing strategic decisions about how to allocate resources; and retaining top performers.

For the past six years, teachers, school leaders, and District education leaders have utilized the information gathered through the implementation of IMPACT to inform all facets of human capital management. DCPS uses IMPACT data to undergird decisions regarding recruitment, hiring/selection, distribution of highly effective teachers, retention, compensation, professional development, separation, and promotion. More information on these efforts can be found in the pages that follow.

Studies have confirmed that these teacher quality policies improved the level of instruction in the District of Columbia.[5] Yet even as the average level of instruction and student achievement has improved, there continue to be gaps in students' access to effective teachers, particularly for students of high poverty and minority students. Data released last year revealed that schools in the District's wards 7 and 8, which serve the highest proportions of students in poverty, have significantly less access to highly effective teachers than the more affluent wards in DC.[6]

Additionally, the DC Graduation Pathways Project, a recent local study examining graduation rates across the city, revealed that students of specific backgrounds are at risk of not graduating. This study found that 50% of the most significantly disengaged students are concentrated in just 7 schools. If our goal as a District is to close the graduation and achievement gaps, then ensuring that these schools are staffed with our best teachers must be a priority.[7]

In order to tackle these issues and ensure equitable access to excellent educators for all students in the District, OSSE submits the following plan to address the inequities in students' access to excellent educators. This plan aims to ensure that students from low-income families, students of color, and students with special needs are not taught by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers at higher rates than other children. This proposal also provides the measures that the agency will use to evaluate the plan to monitor the plan's progress, identify and address potential obstacles, and share successes worthy of replication.

Understanding DC's Unique Education Landscape

This plan focuses on two main questions: the first is *how can we prepare, supply, recruit and place our best teachers in the schools that need them the most?* This question focuses on creating excellent educator pipelines. The second question is *how can we get our best teachers to stay at the schools that need them the most?* Retaining our best teachers at schools where there may be challenges, and ensuring that these teachers are able to contribute to school turnaround efforts, is critical to long term equitable access in the District.

In order to understand the gaps in the District and to address them properly, it is important to acknowledge the unique context of the District's education system, including a significant public charter sector. Almost half of the students in the District are enrolled in over 60 charter LEAs, overseen by the Public Charter School Board (PCSB), the city's sole charter authorizer. Schools in the District's charter sector have almost unlimited flexibility in hiring, separating, and recruiting, and they employ many different systems of teacher evaluation. The traditional public LEA, DCPS, includes most of the District's low-performing schools. While it has less flexibility in its processes and procedures, it has a robust and innovative teacher evaluation system.

The drafting of this plan was initiated alongside work on the District's ESEA flexibility waiver renewal application, as there is a clear link between the two – equitable access to teachers and leaders is a fundamental condition for successful school improvement policies that are outlined in Principle 2 of the ESEA waiver, particularly the 7 school turnaround principles. For example, sophisticated use of data, aimed at a more personalized instruction, can only be successful with great teachers who understand how to use the data to inform instruction. Strategies regarding the effective use of time, including Response to Intervention (RTI) or extended school day, can only result in positive outcomes if great teachers are implementing them. For these reasons OSSE believed that concurrent discussions were critical to building two state plans that would align efforts toward a common goal: great schools for all students.

To create this plan, OSSE convened an internal team of staff members who work in data, policy, teaching and learning, and teacher effectiveness. The team engaged in the development of the plan through six steps:

1. **Development of a stakeholder engagement process:** The team produced a plan for a stakeholder engagement process that was parallel to the agency's engagement and consultation process for the ESEA flexibility waiver renewal application.

2. **Internal root cause discussion:** OSSE leadership invited representatives from the American Institute of Research Center on Great Teachers and Leaders to facilitate an OSSE-led leadership root cause discussion on equitable access in the District of Columbia.

3. **Review of current promising practices:** It was important for the agency and key stakeholders to identify the foundational strategies already underway in the District of Columbia and build on current success. For example, DCPS has accomplished impressive work on developing a variety of human capital policies. DCPS's launches of the IMPACT teacher evaluation system and the corresponding LIFT program have resulted in a career ladder system where high-performing teachers in low-income schools receive significant monetary compensation and professional development opportunities in recognition of their work. There are also important examples of strong practices in charter LEAs, such as Two Rivers, highlighted on page 34 of this report.

4. **Review of available data:** OSSE used available data to identify gaps in teacher effectiveness using three measures of teacher quality (experience, qualifications, and effectiveness) across four categories (poverty, minority, school performance and city ward). These categories are defined and explained in Section 3.

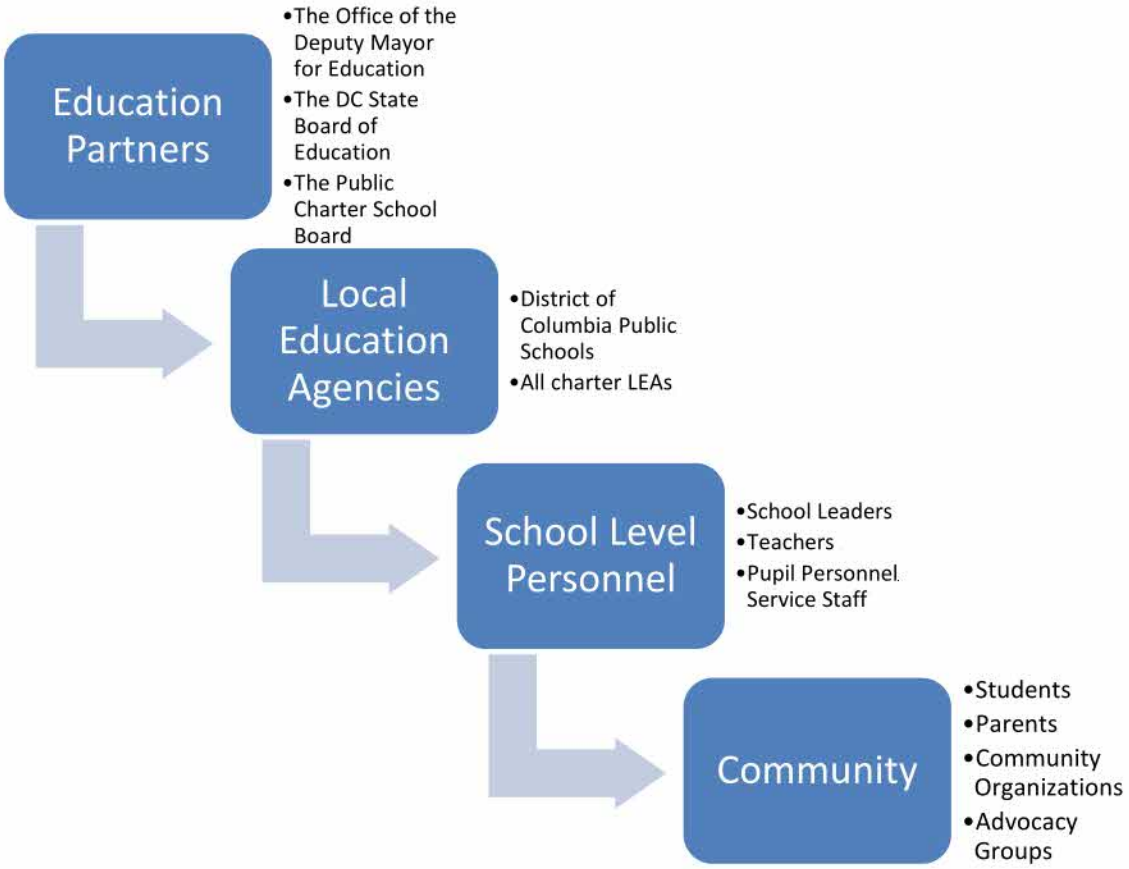
5. **Facilitation of stakeholder engagement process:** Throughout January and February 2015, OSSE conducted extensive stakeholder engagement on the issue of equitable access to effective educators. Consultation on this plan was incorporated into every public meeting OSSE conducted on the flexibility waiver renewal application. In addition, OSSE convened teacher and leader focus groups and met with key stakeholders, such as the State Board of Education, PCSB and DCPS representatives, and the Washington Teachers Union. OSSE also conducted three webinars in addition to face to face meetings.

6. **Design of research-based strategies and measurable targets:** OSSE utilized the quantitative and qualitative data gathered from the above process to complete an initial analysis of equity gaps and develop effective strategies to reduce the gaps.

Section 2: Stakeholder Engagement

OSSE believes that only through extensive consultation with the education community, and particularly with teachers and leaders, can it create a meaningful equitable access plan. Figure 1 describes the types of stakeholders with whom OSSE specifically engaged. Appendix B provides a comprehensive list of all the agencies, institutions, and organizations that were invited to participate in the process.

Figure 1: Overview of Stakeholder Engagement Participants



To achieve meaningful engagement and maximize stakeholder participation, OSSE developed a three-pronged stakeholder engagement process:

1. Public Meetings

OSSE held several public meetings and ensured that at least one meeting was conducted in each of the eight wards of the city. Teachers, leaders, and parents were invited to discuss concerns and insights regarding equitable access.

Appendix A provides a list of the public meetings held, including invitees and participants.

2. Focus Groups: Root Cause Analysis

OSSE invited teachers and leaders to the table to discuss the potential root causes of excellent teachers not being assigned to, or leaving, the District's highest-need schools.

First, OSSE engaged in discussions with teachers who are currently teaching at our highest-need schools, as well as with teachers who left those schools, to explore the various reasons for staying or leaving. To facilitate several of these discussions, OSSE partnered with Teach Plus, an organization which recruits high performing teachers to participate in fellowships with placements at high-need schools. Additionally, OSSE met with teachers in some of the District's lowest performing schools which serve the highest rates of high-need populations. Two focus groups were conducted as a result of this outreach. These opportunities were instrumental in identifying potential working condition issues. OSSE also met with the Washington Teachers Union for additional input. Further, OSSE identified the need to engage Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) teachers specifically, given the fact that STEM subjects are traditionally harder to staff. OSSE held a roundtable with STEM teachers from both high and low need schools to discuss both challenges and promising strategies.

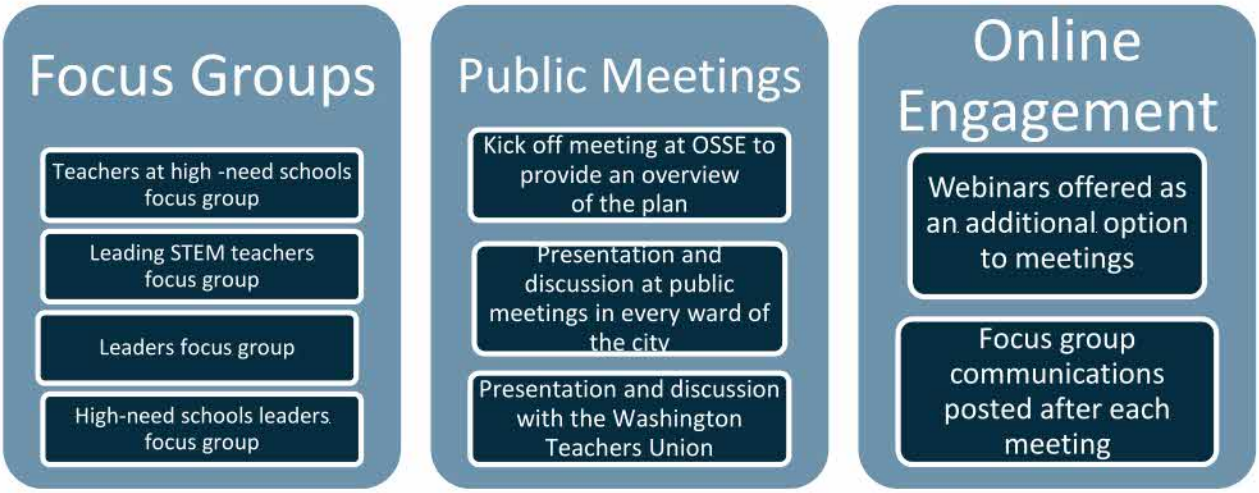
OSSE also held a special convening of the school leaders of the District's lowest performing schools. These schools would be the main beneficiaries of effective equitable access policies, and discussing challenges with these school leaders was a priority.

Following focus group meetings, notes were sent to both the participants and invitees that did not attend to provide another opportunity to provide input.

3. Online Engagement

Public meetings were followed by online webinars as an additional form of engagement. The webinars focused on the same content as the public meetings, and were open to the general public. Information shared via the webinars was later posted on OSSE's website for additional accessibility.

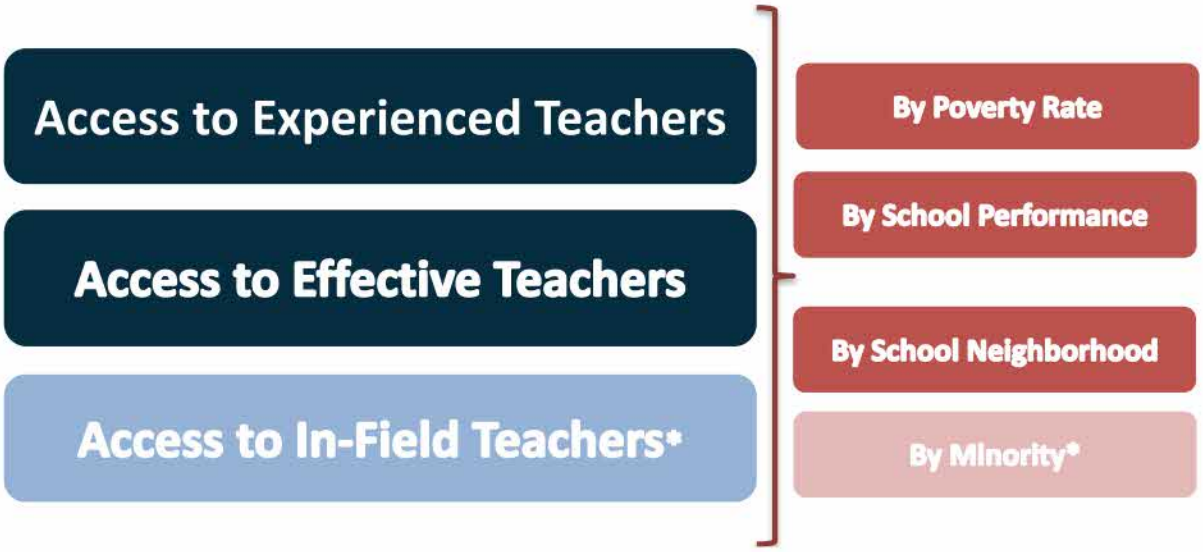
Figure 2: Public Engagement and Consultation



Section 3: Equity Gaps

A number of data sources were used in order to analyze equity gaps in the District. OSSE compared rates of access to experienced teachers to effective teachers and to in-field teachers, as defined below. To analyze gaps, OSSE calculated the rates of "inexperienced," "ineffective," and "out-of-field" teachers for different groups of students.

Figure 3: Metrics Used for Measuring Equity Gaps



*Gaps in access to in-field teachers and gaps across minority levels are reported in Appendix C.

Key Definitions[i]

Teacher Definitions	
Inexperienced Teacher	Teachers in their first year in of teaching
Unqualified Teacher (Ineffective Teachers)	Teachers that are rated on the lowest tier of an approved teacher evaluation system (out of four tiers). This category of teachers will be referred to as "ineffective teachers" throughout the document.
Highly Effective Teachers	Teachers rated on the highest tier of an approved teacher evaluation system (out of four tiers).
Below Effective Teachers	Teachers rated on one of the two lowest tiers of an approved teacher evaluation system (out of four tiers).[8]
Out-of-field Teacher	Teachers who do not have a highly qualified teacher (HQT) designation in the subject which they are teaching.
Student, School, and Geographic Definitions	
Low-income Student	Student who is defined by OSSE as "at-risk" based on definition utilized for local funding purposes. This designation includes students who are either homeless, in the District's foster care system, qualify for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or high school students that are one year older, or more, than the expected age for the grade in which the students are enrolled.
Minority Student	Any student who is identified as a minority race or ethnicity (e.g. African American, Latino, Native American, Asian, Pacific Islander, or more than one race).
Low-Income School	School where 25% or more of students are "at-risk."
High-Minority School	School where 50% or more of the students are racial or ethnic minorities.
Low-performing School	A school designated as "Priority" or "Focus," the lowest categories within the state's accountability system, pursuant to the ESEA waiver.
City Ward	A municipal ward in which the school is located. There are eight geographic wards in the District of Columbia.
High-Need School	A school that is either low income, low performing or in Ward 7 or 8.

OSSE decided to focus on effectiveness and experience as key metrics in measuring equity gaps in the District. First, the availability of rigorous teacher evaluation systems in the District presents an opportunity to conduct a quality analysis of gaps in the access to effective teaching, as measured by LEAs. In addition, the category of "first year teacher" is an objective measure based on limited experience and therefore broadly perceived as a meaningful metric of effectiveness. Many studies support this notion and measure significant gains in teacher effectiveness starting the second year of instruction and onward.[9]

[i] Prior to completing the analysis based on the "Key Definitions" table, OSSE and stakeholders reviewed and considered the Department of Education Educator Equity Profile, available online at http://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/equitable/dceep.pdf, which is based upon a 2011-2012 school year data collection that includes all DC schools. After this review, OSSE examined its 2013-14 school year data collection. Because the 2013-2014 school year collection was more recent and more robust than the prior year's data, OSSE determined to utilize it for this analysis, as it provides a more accurate picture of current gaps between poverty levels, minorities, performance levels and city wards in DC.

The use of both metrics allows the plan to focus primarily on gaps in access to great teachers. In addition, the availability of these two measures allowed OSSE to decrease the focus on "out-of-field" metrics, as there is little to no evidence correlating them with student performance. For example, researchers have found a large variation in teacher effectiveness among teachers with similar certification status.[10]

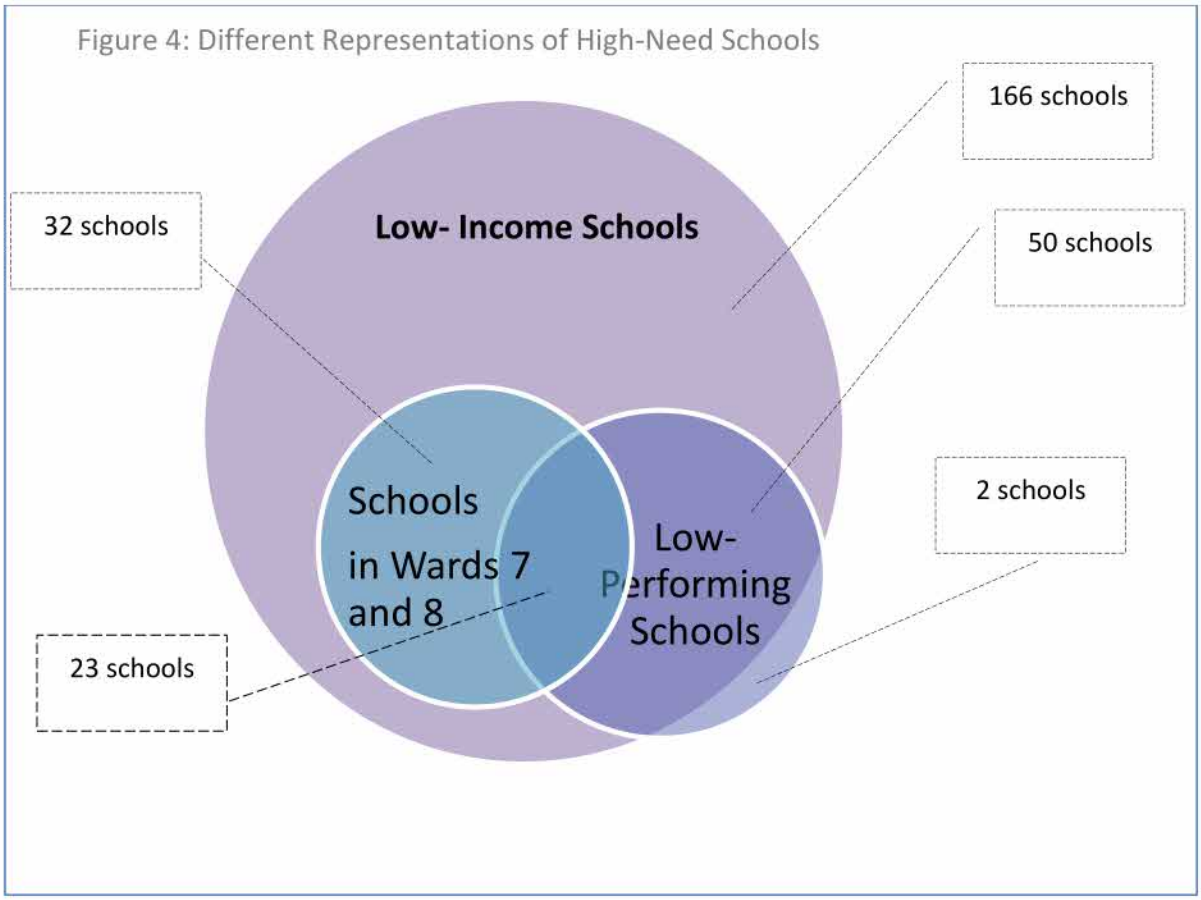
In identifying each of these gaps, a number of considerations were utilized that acknowledged the District's unique demographic context. The majority of students in the District of Columbia public and public charter schools is African American or Latino and come from low-income households. In fact, data collected by OSSE for the 2012- 2013 school year reveal that over 92% of students are non-white and 74% of students are economically disadvantaged. These high percentages required several adjustments to the analysis:

1. **Measuring Gaps Across Poverty Levels**

   To measure gaps related to socioeconomic status, OSSE elected not to use a Free and Reduced Price Lunch Rate (FRPL) metric as a component of its analysis for two primary reasons. First, a significant majority of students in the District of Columbia qualify for FRPL with varying levels of need, and many schools use community eligibility, a process whereby all students qualify for FRPL if other poverty thresholds are met. Because of these extenuating circumstances, OSSE elected to instead utilize a locally created "at-risk" designation, developed for weighted local per-pupil funding, that includes students who are either homeless, in the District's foster care system, qualify for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or high school students that are one year older, or more, than the expected age for the grade in which the students are enrolled. By using this available metric, OSSE is able to better identify schools that serve high poverty students.

   Using this at-risk definition, OSSE defined a high poverty school as a school with 25% or more of "low-income" students, as a higher cutoff would falsely exclude schools that deal with challenges of serving high poverty populations. While the majority of schools in the District are included in this "high poverty school" definition, these are schools that would have been included in a high poverty definition of a state that is larger and not entirely urban. The additional comparison across city wards on school performance is also meant to display a more targeted high poverty subset of schools.

Figure 4: Different Representations of High-Need Schools



2. Measuring Gaps Across Minority Groups

Since the vast majority of schools have over 90% minority students, any cutoff calculation used to define a "high minority school" would leave a small group of schools in the "low minority" category, making comparisons across the groups insignificant and less effective in identifying and closing equity gaps. Therefore, comparison of rates of access to effective, experienced, and in-field teachers based on minority status are not discussed in depth but can be found in Appendix C.

3. Measuring Gaps Across Performance Levels

The school performance measure compares the schools in the lowest achievement categories to the rest of the schools in the District. These low performing schools also have the highest rates of high poverty, and almost exclusively minority populations, and thus the addition of this metric allows for more targeted identification of gaps in these areas. This measure was used to emphasize the critical goal of increasing the access to excellent educators for students as a mean of school improvement.

Since the implementation of the ESEA Waiver, OSSE increased its efforts to support improvements in its lowest performing schools. Through OSSE's state system of support, which combines foundational support with direct intervention in low performing schools, multiple strategies have been implemented to address the root causes of low performance.

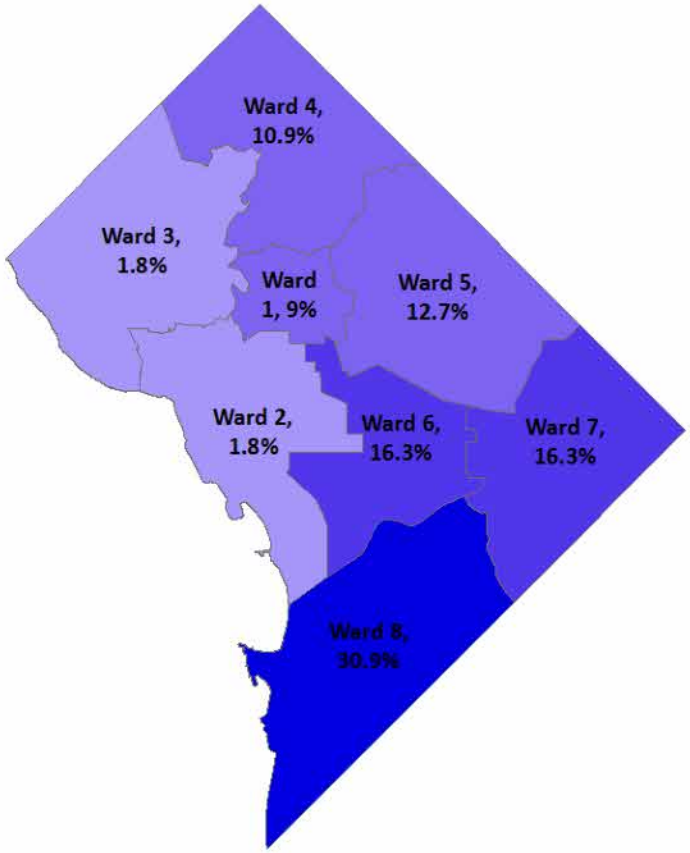
One understanding that was reinforced through this work is that access to great teachers and leaders is a condition for school improvement, and that without great educators, interventions and supports are unlikely to drive change. Therefore, OSSE's plan intentionally focuses on equity gaps between the schools that were classified by OSSE as Priority and Focus schools through the ESEA waiver, the two lowest school performance categories, and other schools, with the intention of developing strategies to improve access to excellent educators to support improvement in these schools.

4. Measuring Gaps Across City Wards

There are eight wards in the District of Columbia. Analyzing teacher equity gaps by ward is important due to significant differences in student demographics and school performance among them. For instance, 46% of the lowest performing schools are clustered in ward 7 and ward 8, the two least affluent areas of the city, while only two schools (just over 1%) were identified as low performing in ward 2 and ward 3.

Wards 7 and 8 also manifest the highest levels of poverty, and should be emphasized as a result. According to the Urban Institute, between 2007 and 2013 there were over 10,000 new enrollees in SNAP in both wards 7 and 8, while the total number of program enrollees in Ward 3 rose by only 365.[11]

Figure 5: Percent of Priority and Focus Schools by Ward



Comprehensive reporting of equity gaps across all required metrics, including gaps in the access to out-of-field teachers and gaps across minority levels, is available in Appendix C.

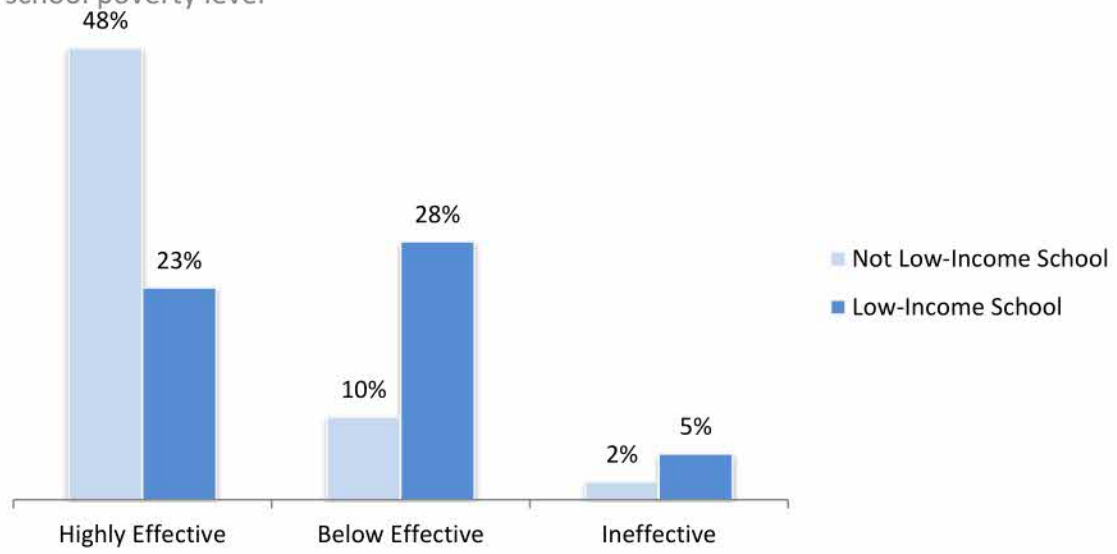
Gaps in Access to Effective Teachers

The District of Columbia's ESEA waiver mandates that all Local Education Agencies (LEA) that receive federal funding must implement teacher evaluation systems which comply with federal guidelines. LEAs have developed teacher evaluation systems that rely on multiple measures of teacher effectiveness. The District of Columbia Public Schools' (DCPS) IMPACT teacher evaluation system includes a value-added model linked to student performance on the state assessment, a rigorous classroom observation framework, and a measure for commitment to the school community.[12] Charter LEAs have a variety of different teacher evaluation systems, but all charter LEAs receiving Title I funds must include student growth as a significant portion of a teacher's summative evaluation rating. DCPS includes five summative ratings for teachers: highly effective, effective, developing, minimally effective, and ineffective. Charter LEAs are required to differentiate performance meaningfully by using at least four performance levels. Since teacher effectiveness is measured differently between DCPS and charter LEAs, all school-level scatter plot analyses label whether the school is a DCPS or Charter school.

Due to a variety of performance levels used at different LEAs and the common practice of rating most teachers toward the upper middle band of performance (typically referred to as

"effective")[13], this analysis focused on the tails; specifically, the percentage of teachers rated "highly effective", "below effective" and "ineffective." While some may believe that teacher effectiveness should not be compared across different evaluation systems, OSSE find that this is a useful comparison of the LEAs' satisfaction with the performance of their teachers, especially at the tails.

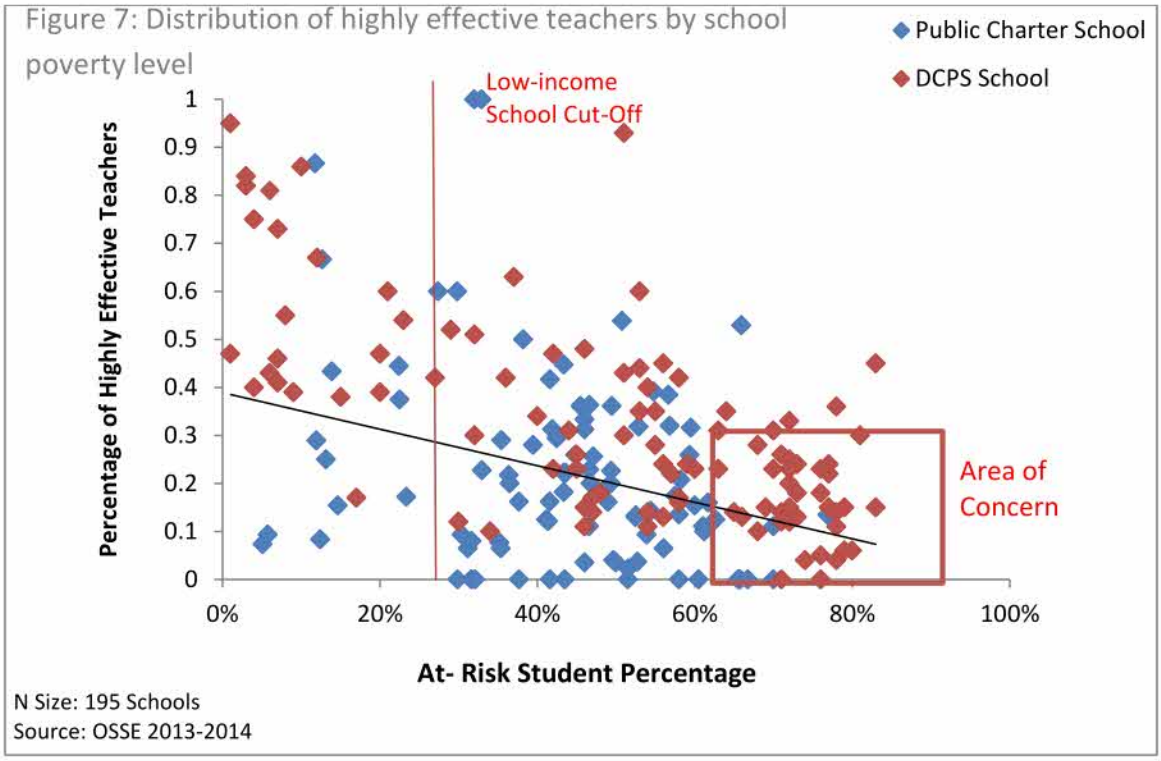
Figure 6: Percentage of highly effective, below effective and ineffective teachers by school poverty level



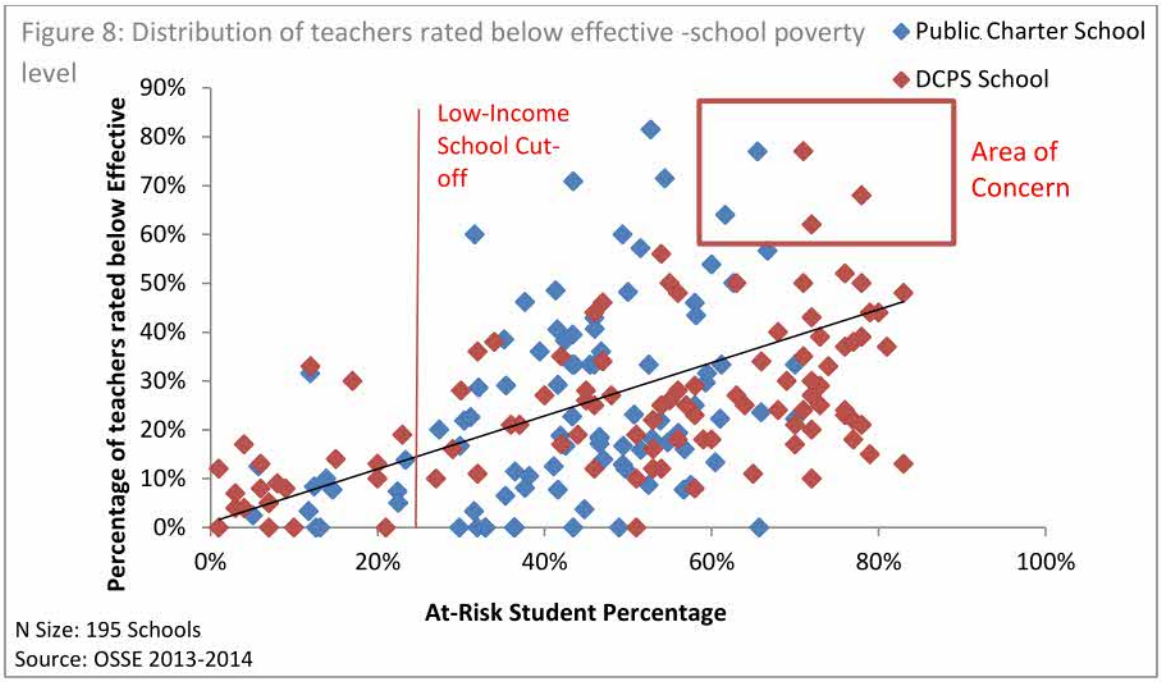
N Size: 201 Schools
Source: OSSE 2013-2014

The effectiveness data from across the District of Columbia illustrates sizable gaps between the percentages of highly effective teachers serving in low-income schools compared to other schools. In addition, low-income schools have significantly higher percentages of teachers rated below effective and ineffective. Despite the sizable proportional gap in access to ineffective teachers, the overall percentages of ineffective teachers in both low-income and not low-income schools are small.

Highly effective teachers in particular have the ability to close achievement gaps and drastically alter life outcomes for students.[14] Research suggests that access to highly effective teachers over time dramatically increases student achievement and closes achievement gaps between low-income and high-income students within as soon as three school years.[15] The graph below shows a clear trend between access to highly effective teachers and the percentage of student defined as "at-risk." A particular area of concern is that out of the 55 schools with a student population consisting of 60% or more defined as at-risk, only two have over 30% of their teachers rated highly effective.



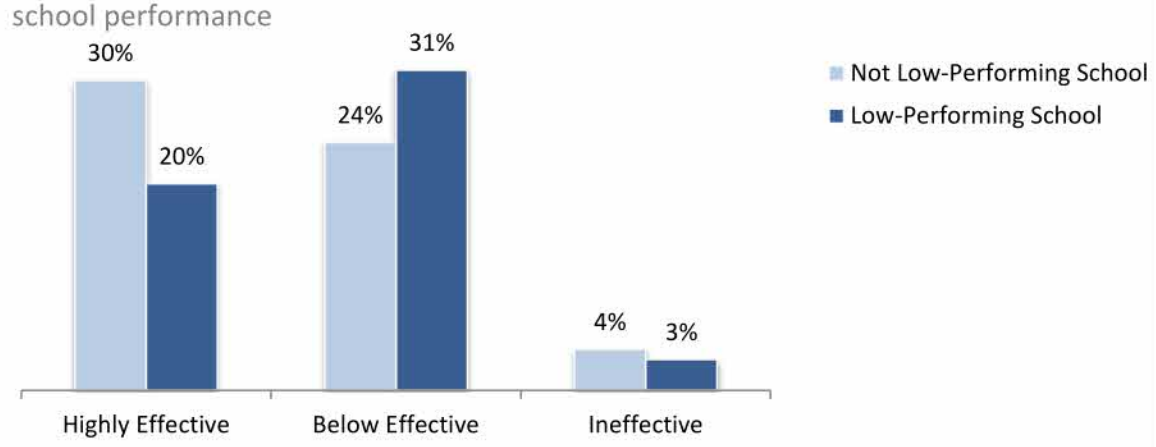
Just as student access to highly effective teachers has been shown to close achievement gaps between low-income students and their more affluent peers, teachers that are not effective exacerbate gaps when they are concentrated in high-need schools. Figure 8 shows a clear trend between the percentage of teachers rated below effective and the percentage of students defined as "at-risk". Unfortunately, schools with higher percentages of at-risk students are disproportionately more likely to employ teachers who are not performing well. In fact, the 45 schools with at-risk populations over 65% have a teaching force in which on average, 50% of teachers are rated below effective.



Although analyzing effectiveness across poverty levels is critically important, it does not control for school performance. School performance is an important metric, as school improvement is one of the goals of this plan. As mentioned earlier, having access to high quality teachers and leaders is a condition for the success of other school improvement policies.

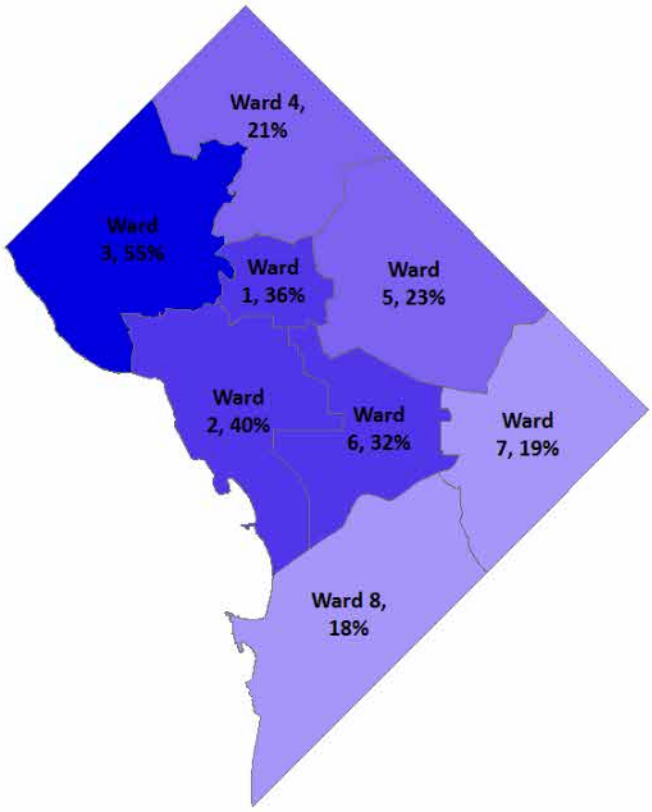
Figure 9 is a comparison between the percentages of highly effective, below effective, and ineffective teachers at low-performing schools compared to schools that are not low-performing. The low-performing schools have significantly fewer highly effective teachers and a much larger proportion of teachers rated below effective.

Figure 9: Percentage of highly effective, below effective, and ineffective teachers by school performance



N Size: 178
Source: OSSE 2013-2014

Figure 10: Percentage of highly effective teachers by ward



An analysis of distribution of teacher effectiveness by ward shows significant gaps between the affluent ward 3 and the lower-income wards 7 and 8 in their access to effective teachers. The ward-by-ward analysis of teacher effectiveness also reveals gaps between higher-income wards

and lower-income wards. Almost half of teachers in Ward 3, the District of Columbia's most affluent ward, are rated highly effective, while wards 7 and 8 only have 16% of their teachers rated highly effective.

Below is a table of DCPS-specific teacher effectiveness data across poverty, race, and performance:

Indicator	Low-income School	Not Low-income School	Low Performing School	Not Low Performing School
% Highly Effective	25%	56%	30%	39%
% Below Effective	30%	10%	31%	21%

Based on a sample of 111 DCPS schools, all using the IMPACT system (see description above).

This analysis compares teacher effectiveness using just one evaluation system, and mirrors the statewide analysis, demonstrating significant gaps in access to highly effective and effective teachers.

Gaps in Access to Experienced Teachers

As noted above, research shows that first year teachers are less effective than their more experienced counterparts, and it takes three to four years for teachers to maximize their effectiveness, and in most cases their performance remains constant after that. Therefore, we use the percentage of first year teachers as our metric for access to "inexperienced" teachers.

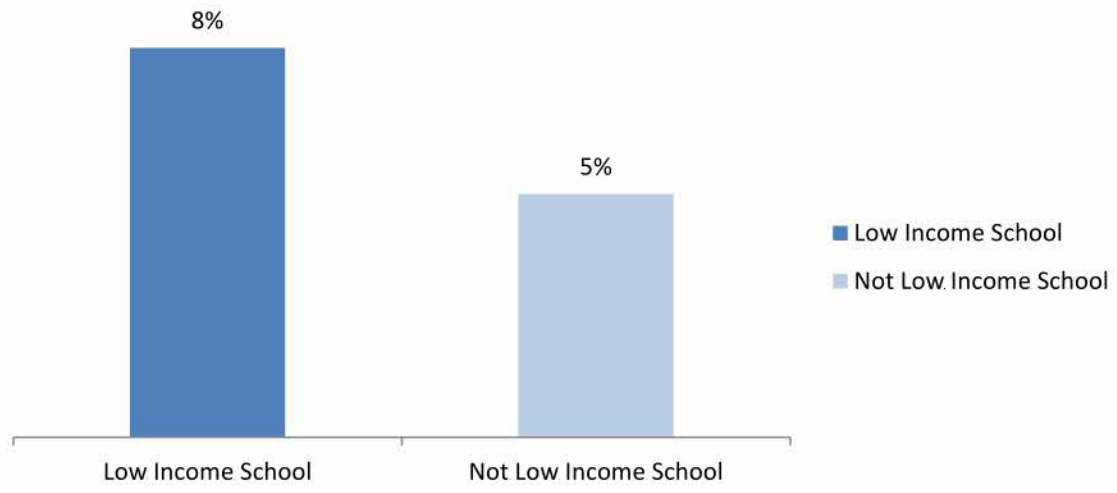
Experience is a key metric because it is not only highly correlated with effectiveness for early career teachers but also can serve as a proxy for teacher turnover at a particular school. When the rate of teachers in their first year at a particular school is higher than the average, it can be assumed that the rate of teacher turnover is higher.

For this analysis, we used OSSE data from 2013-2014 and also included an analysis using 2011-2012 data on first-year teacher rates and student demographics (free and reduced lunch rates and racial/ethnic demographics) from the Department of Education.[ii]

[ii] While the OSSE's data is more recent, it covers most of the schools in DC, but not all of them. Therefore, we included Department of Education data that is older but incorporates all schools. For the Department of Education data, poverty is calculated using free and reduced lunch rates. OSSE is working to improve quality of staffing data collection through multiple initiatives so that gaps would be calculated based on the most recent available data and for all schools.

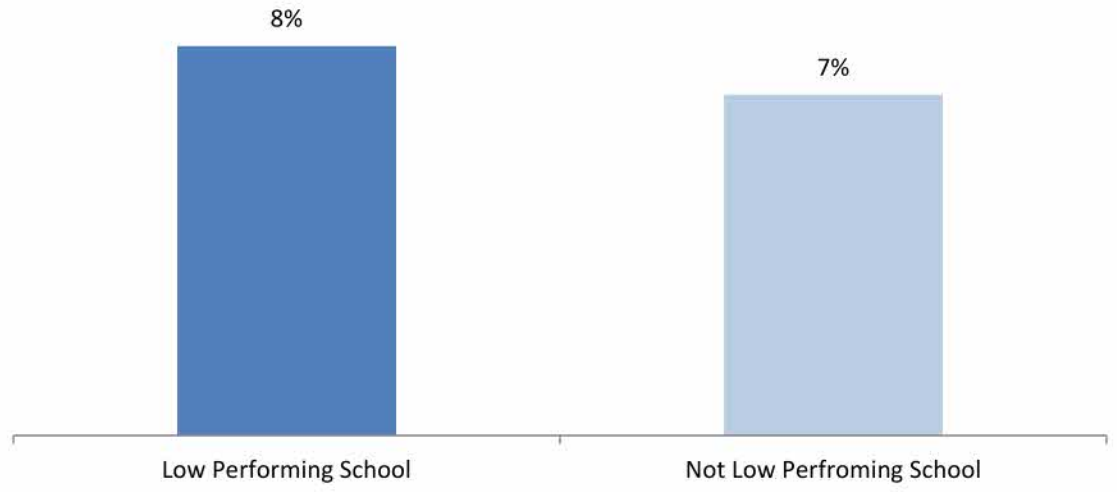
The analysis did not reveal a significant gap between the percentages of inexperienced teachers at low-income schools compared to schools not in this category. There is also a negligible relationship between experience and the size of the at-risk student population when every school in the District of Columbia is included.

Figure 11: First year teachers by school income level



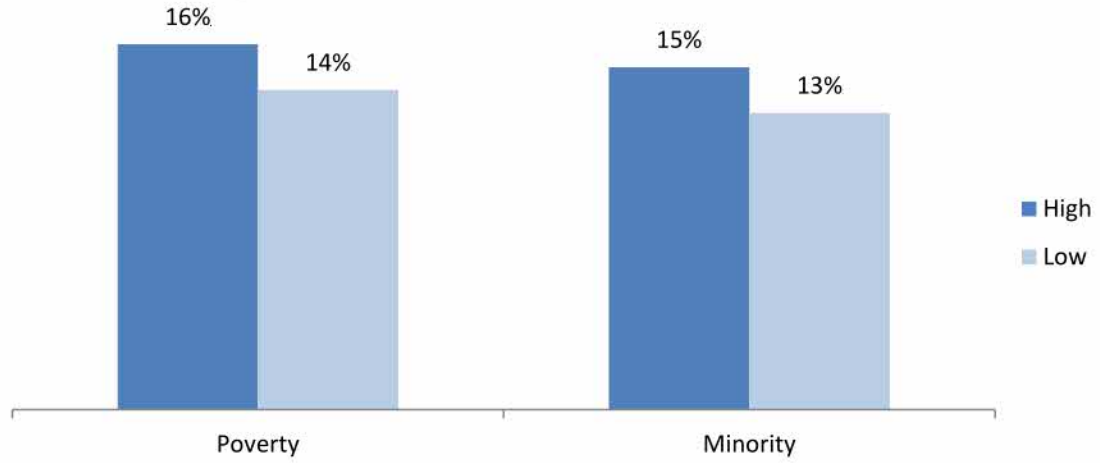
N Size: 167
Source: OSSE 2013-2014

Figure 12: Percentage of first year teachers by school performance



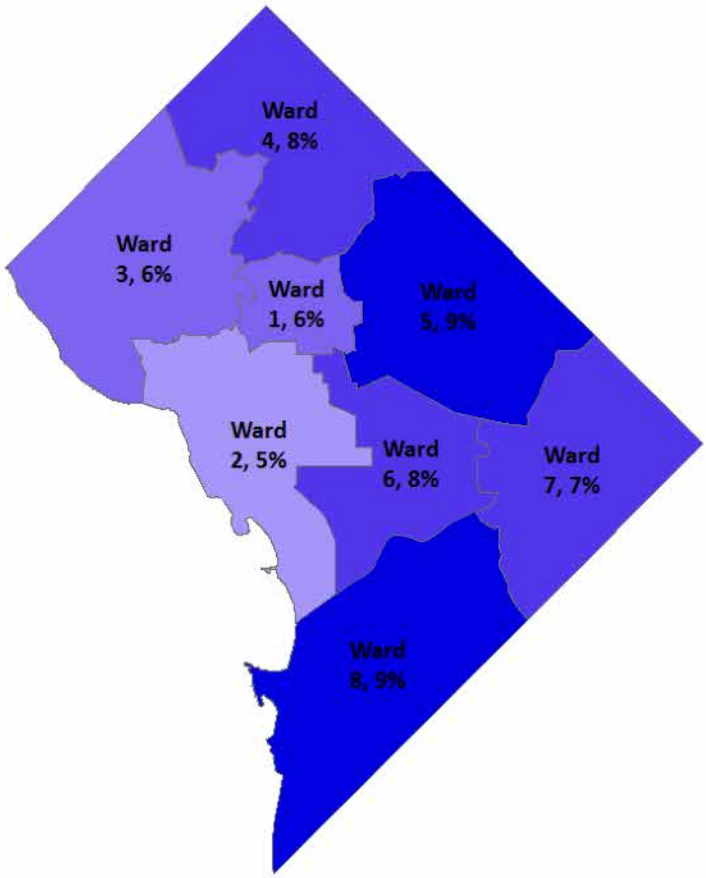
N Size: 153
Source: OSSE 2013-2014

Figure 13: Percentage of first year teachers by poverty and minority (Department of Education data)



N Size: 220
Source: Educator Equity Profile 2011-2012, http://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/equitable/dceep.pdf

Figure 14: Percentage of first year teachers by city ward



A ward-by-ward analysis of the percentages of first-year teachers must be examined in more detail to understand the rates of first year teachers. One concern that results from the ward analysis was the high percentage of first year teachers serving students in Ward 8, the city's highest poverty ward and the ward with the highest concentration of Priority and Focus schools.

Equity Gap Summary

Using multiple calculations, OSSE observed several noteworthy trends. Students are much less likely to be assigned to an effective teacher, if they attend a school that is located in Ward 7 or 8, serve a high poverty population, and have a history of low performance. As these schools are at the focus of school improvement efforts at all levels, the significance of these findings cannot be underscored enough. We did not find significant gaps when measuring the access to experienced teachers.

Increasing the likelihood that high poverty students will be assigned to an effective teacher who is not in his or her first year of teaching is critical in order to eliminate the achievement gap in the city. Therefore, the strategies outlined in this plan are designed to reverse this trend and ensure that low performing schools, and schools that serve high poverty populations, have the teachers and leaders they need in order to drive improvement, and provide high quality education for all students.

In the following sections of the plan, OSSE discusses potential root causes of these challenges and presents key strategies designed to close these equity gaps.

Section 4: Root Cause Analysis

To assist with the development of appropriate strategies, OSSE convened teachers and leaders from across different schools in the District to conduct a qualitative root cause analysis, in addition to holding ongoing conversations with LEA leaders and a completing a review of relevant research.

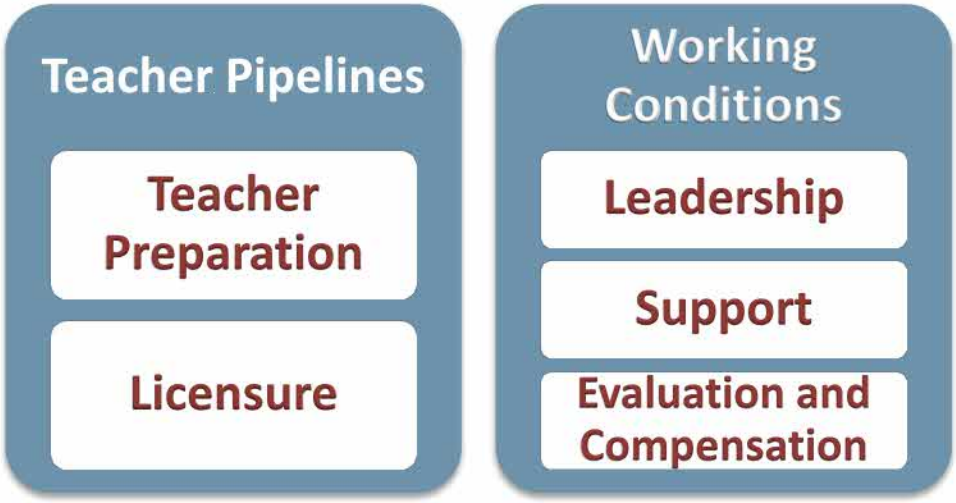
As noted above, the DC Graduation Pathways Project research that preceded the process of writing the Equitable Access plan identified that most of the students with a risk of disengagement are concentrated in a small number of schools. Figure 7 further shows that a very small number of mostly DCPS schools serve a high poverty population of students but lack access to highly effective teachers. Based on this data, OSSE made an effort to ensure the participation of these teachers and leaders from the city's most struggling schools in its analysis of root causes.

In these focus group discussions with teachers and school leaders as well as members of the community OSSE introduced key discussion questions in the context of national and local data. OSSE presented national data on gaps across poverty and minority populations, alongside DCPS data on the distribution of teacher effectiveness scores by wards to show gaps across the city. To better connect national data with local choices made by DC educators, OSSE met with teachers who chose to serve within DC's highest-need schools, as well as "leavers"—teachers who previously taught in high need schools and decided to transfer out.

Based on the national data and the experiences shared by participating teachers, OSSE asked teachers and leaders what they perceived as the reasons for gaps in access to great teachers, specifically focusing on two questions: (1) What gets in the way of having our best teachers placed at high-need schools? (2) What gets in the way of keeping the best teachers who are currently in high-need schools in their current placements?

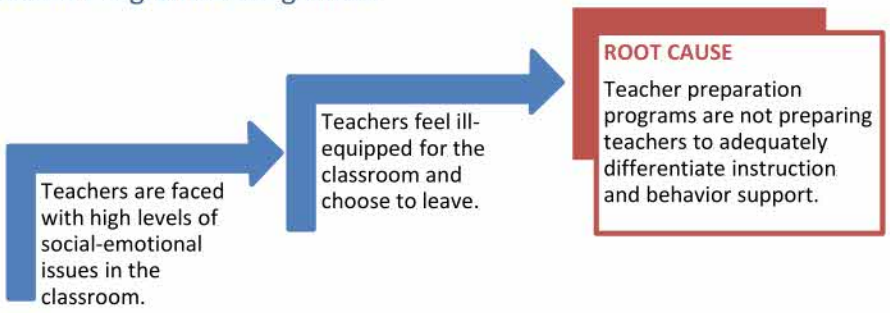
Through this process, we identified the five root causes that are presented in the figure below:

Figure 13: Teacher and Principal-Identified Root Causes



Teacher Pipeline Root Causes

Teacher Preparation Program Misalignment



In the focus group discussions, principals expressed the opinion that many graduates are not prepared for the challenges that come with working at high poverty urban schools, where social-emotional challenges are often significant due to higher levels of family stress and in some cases, the impact of trauma.[16]

Teachers in high poverty schools also emphasized behavioral issues in the classroom as a challenge for which they were not fully prepared, noting that these issues interfere with implementing high quality instruction.

National research confirms that preparation programs that expose teaching candidates to high poverty school environments can produce better teachers for these schools. Research also shows that candidates who student-teach in high poverty environments become more effective in any school environment.[17]

Principals and teachers in the focus groups agreed that they want to see more alignment between teacher education program curricula and the needs of classrooms in high poverty schools. Teaching in high-need schools requires specific skills and competencies that principals felt were lacking in many of the graduates of the preparation programs. Both principals and LEA administrators indicated that they would like to have a mechanism for increasing the feedback to, and the accountability for, these programs in order to improve alignment between skills and actual needs.

Inadequate Teacher Supply

In the discussions, several principals shared a concern about misalignment between the demand for teachers who are certified in particular subjects and the supply of teachers from teacher preparation programs. For example, some principals noted the benefit that they receive from graduates that are dually-certified in general and special education, but stated that they are not hiring such candidates only because of a shortage in supply. This is particularly important for schools that serve high poverty populations and schools that were identified as having low access to effective and experienced teachers above, as these schools also have higher rates of special education populations.

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Several principals in the focus groups also mentioned that with regard to electives, and particularly the arts, teachers are reluctant to be assigned to a high-need school, where the elective programs are typically less established or emphasized than in schools that serve other populations.

Teacher Licensure

Principals and district human capital managers suggested that licensure regulations deny them the opportunity to bring in and keep effective teachers. DCPS constantly experiences obstacles in the recruitment of effective teachers from out of state or from another education sector if

they are not licensed. While these teachers may have been effective outside of the District, their performance cannot currently be considered as a factor for licensure in the District.

Furthermore, many District high schools that serve high poverty populations receive students that are below grade level, particularly in reading. Often times, these students will attend high schools with elementary school reading levels. Principals and teachers at some of our high-need schools emphasized the need to hire elementary-school reading specialists who can help students who struggle. Licensure regulations that require high school certification prevent this type of hiring and do not permit the needed flexibility for principals and human capital managers.

Finally, retention of effective teachers was the most significant issue raised by human capital personnel with regard to current licensure regulations. While there is a relatively easier pathway for temporary licensure, and a pathway for unlicensed teachers, teachers are removed from the classroom if requirements for a permanent license are not met within a given timeframe, irrespective of their effectiveness rating. The fact that licensure requirements do not factor in teacher effectiveness ratings is an issue identified by LEA human capital managers as a key obstacle for retaining effective teachers.

The inflexibility of the licensure regulations also creates an uneven playing field between DCPS and the charter sector, for which these regulations are not applicable. This is particularly important as DCPS has the majority of the District's lowest performing and highest poverty schools. Essentially, charter schools have larger pool of candidates to choose from and possess complete flexibility in developing strategies to retain teachers at high-need schools.

Working Conditions Root Causes

The "Working Conditions" category addresses root causes that are very interrelated. A common theme of all the discussions on working conditions was the need for differentiation in policies and practices in order to effectively support the success of high-need schools. Discussions highlighted three types of differentiation:

- Differentiation in leadership (meaning that high-need school principals have a different job than other principals, and their role thus requires unique skillset and competencies);
- Differentiation in supports (meaning that teachers in high-need schools need different types of supports than other teachers); and
- Differentiation in evaluation and compensation (teachers in high-need schools should be evaluated and compensated differently).

Teachers responded to the data that was presented on equity gaps in DC and nationally by sharing their perspectives on what contributes to these gaps. Teachers noted that it is insufficient to think about great teaching absent a consideration of the teaching environment. Therefore, they noted that a root cause analysis must consider the degree to which teachers are provided with the supporting conditions necessary to succeed in high need schools. It is not

just a question of distributing talent; rather, it is a question of creating environments in which talent can grow and develop.

Further, some teachers stated their belief that there may currently be many teachers at high-need schools that could become highly effective with the right supporting conditions and teachers who are rated as highly effective within low-poverty schools would likely lose this rating if reassigned to teach in high-poverty schools with poor working conditions. Therefore, some participating teachers noted that the gap would not close without addressing the working conditions in these schools. Many teachers emphasized the importance of effective, strong school leadership that provides support for teachers, as well as the need for a balanced and fair teacher evaluation and compensation system.

Principal Leadership

The main root cause in the "working conditions" category is that of school leadership. Interestingly, in the focus group discussions, this focus on leadership primarily came from teachers who are generally satisfied and have been retained at high-need schools. Many of these same teachers mentioned challenges similar to those noted by teachers who have either left their schools or expressed the intent to leave their schools; however, good leadership was brought up as a mean to overcome such challenges.

Teachers in the focus groups who decided to teach at high-need schools in the District talked about the chance to succeed despite challenges being conditioned upon having great leadership at their school. They said that teachers want to make a difference for children, but most of them believe that they cannot do it without a strong leader behind them. Many teachers in the focus groups shared that principal turnover was as a reason for leaving high-need schools. The impact of leadership quality on teacher retention is also supported by national research.[18]

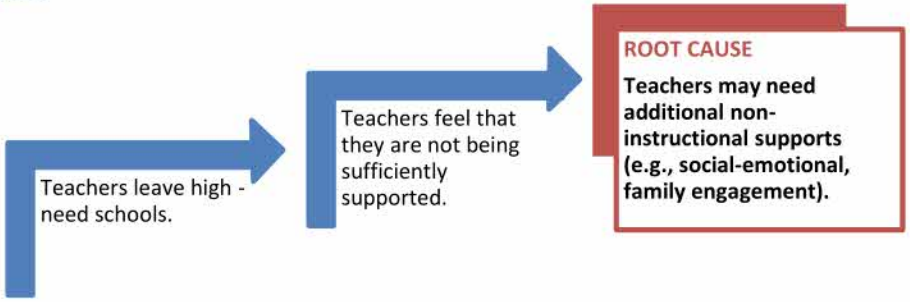
The principal's use of a shared leadership model was also discussed as an important factor in teacher retention at high-need schools. Teachers expressed wanting to be a part of decision-making in the school, to have an opportunity to voice the concerns and challenges that they

deal with in the classroom, and to be part of the problem solving and continuous improvement process. Some teachers that left high-need schools also noted that isolation from the administration was a significant driver of their eventual departure. In one school, teachers noted that the isolation from the school leadership negatively impacted their instruction. For example, when teachers were not informed of a violent incident that the administration learned took place between students outside the school grounds, teachers did not feel prepared to effectively address the situation in the classroom.

In addition, the degree of collaboration among staff was heavily emphasized both by teachers who stayed and teachers who left high-need schools, or "leavers," in the focus group discussions. Leavers pointed to being isolated from peers, often times even with a sense of competition among them, while having to manage an extremely challenging job under tough conditions. High degrees of staff collaboration and morale were perhaps the most dominant determinants of retention in the focus group discussions, and both consistently tracked back to the ability of leaders to prioritize and foster such a culture.

One of the main issues teachers repeatedly raised in the discussions was the high number of impediments to instruction teachers in high-need schools face. These impediments can present themselves in the form of behavioral problems in the school, a lack of planning time for teachers, a disorganized working environment, or other factors. Teachers pointed to the need for strong processes and procedures that eliminate distractions and help teachers focus on instruction. Again, this issue was connected to strong leadership that recognizes this challenge and intentionally creates such processes. Teachers in schools with strong leadership pointed to a clear behavioral code that is being consistently followed, structured planning time for teachers, clear procedures around the beginning and end of the school day and between classes, and generally a very organized and thoughtful working environment that allows teachers to maximize their focus on actual instruction.

Teacher Support



Support for teachers is another significant root cause in the "working conditions" category. It is highly correlated with the leadership root cause, as great leaders often provide many of the

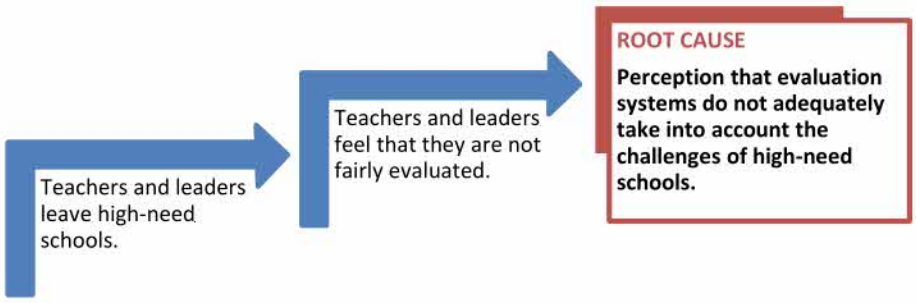
supports that are missing in these schools. Researchers have found that teachers who receive high levels of support are less likely to leave their schools and/or the teaching profession.[19]

While teachers discussed the importance of instructional support in the focus group discussions, they also talked about the need for assistance with non-instructional supports. These include social-emotional supports for teachers at high-need schools that serve students with behavioral challenges that schools may not be fully equipped to address.

Teachers also talked about professional supports in cases of disagreements with parents. Participants noted that high conflict interactions with families can cause teachers to experience feelings of insecurity and that managing these interactions requires a high level of support from their employer. Teachers noted that without the backing of the administration it can be very difficult to manage the stress experienced from such interactions with parents and the community.

In the focus group discussions, some principals indicated that support for teachers should be consistent throughout their career and that too often we are concentrating on supporting first year teachers while neglecting other teachers that need support as well, particularly teachers with two to five years of experience.

Differentiated Evaluation and Compensation



In the focus group discussions, many teachers and leaders shared that they do not believe current teacher evaluation systems sufficiently control for their unique challenges. For example, some teachers believe that the system does not adequately capture academic gains for students that are below grade level and thus the system does not reward them for significant academic gains for students who are far behind at the beginning of the year and still below grade level at the end of the year (in spite of making significant academic gains).

Several principals expressed similar concerns about their own evaluations in that they may not account for the very low baseline of many of their students upon initial enrollment. Participants also raised questions about the lack of differentiation in the classroom observation system, which unlike the student growth component in the teacher evaluation rubric, does not account

for the different challenges that teachers in high-need schools face. Both the compensation system and the evaluation system were raised by teachers and leaders as factors that influence their decision to teach at high-need schools.

Root Cause Discussions: Next Step

As outlined below, the plan supports ongoing quantitative data analysis and additional qualitative data collection to be shaped further through discussion with teachers and leaders. This iterative approach allows for validation of the currently identified root causes and further analysis based upon data not available at the time of the initial development of this plan.

Section 5: Strategies for Success

This section presents key steps that OSSE, in partnership with its stakeholders, will take to:

1) Address emerging root causes identified within the planning process; and
2) Create a framework to further explore root causes in more depth.

OSSE begins this discussion with an examination of strategies that are already in place and showing promise within the District's traditional public and charter school sectors.

Promising Practices: District of Columbia Public Schools

DCPS IMPACTplus:

DCPS has designed incentives for its best teachers to assign to and teach in high-poverty schools through IMPACTplus, which makes the highest performing teachers in the lowest-income schools eligible for the largest bonuses. In addition to larger bonuses for teachers in low-income schools, DCPS has expanded its bonus structure to include a specific financial add-on for the most successful teachers in its 40 lowest-performing schools. Teachers can receive up to $20,000 if rated as "highly effective," which is ten times higher than the bonus offered to teachers at low-poverty schools. IMPACTplus also serves as a teacher retention tool. While DCPS does not believe that additional compensation causes its dedicated and hardworking teachers to work any harder, they do believe that recognizing and compensating teachers as true professionals makes DCPS a district where great teachers want to stay.

TNTP's policy report, The Irreplaceables (2012), finds that DCPS is retaining high performers at a much higher rate than low performers. Whereas the four other districts cited in the report retained high and low performers at very similar, if not virtually the same, rates at the end of the 2009-2010 school year (an average of 85% of high performers and 79% of low performers retained), DCPS retained 89% of its high performers and only 61% of its low performers. These data show that DCPS's human capital initiatives are successfully helping the district to retain its top performers.

Promotion in DCPS:

DCPS weighs IMPACT data very heavily in considering teachers who are applying for other district positions such as assistant principal, instructional coach, or master educator. Effectiveness data is also the primary factor in considering teachers for voluntary leadership positions such as the Chancellor's Teachers' Cabinet, an advisory group consisting of 25 teachers that meets with the Chancellor monthly to provide input on key policy decisions – or the Teachers Central to Leadership Fellowship, a highly selective program that places 6-8 teachers in a central office department for five weeks over the summer, during which they lead a substantive district project and meet with members of the senior district management team. Teachers also need to reach a particular stage on the LIFT career ladder in order to be eligible for school and district leadership positions and for teacher leadership opportunities. This ensures that promotion decisions are primarily driven by data on teacher effectiveness.

Separations in DCPS:

DCPS has been more aggressive than any other district to date in separating teachers who do not meet the standards under the evaluation system. Teachers who earn Ineffective ratings are subject to dismissal at the end of the school year. Teachers who earn Minimally Effective ratings for two consecutive years are subject to dismissal at the end of the second year, and teachers who earn Developing ratings for three years are subject to dismissal at the end of the third year.

DCPS Leadership Initiative For Teachers (LIFT):

Traditionally, many teachers have found that the only way to advance in their careers is to leave the classroom. The Leadership Initiative for Teachers (LIFT) is designed to change that. LIFT is a five-stage career ladder that provides high-performing teachers with opportunities for advancement inside the classroom, as well as additional responsibility and increased recognition and compensation. At its core, LIFT is about honoring teachers as professionals, and making DCPS a place where teachers at any point in their careers can continue to learn and grow in an environment where they are respected and appreciated.

LIFT's Goals:

1. **Retain Top Performers:** As teachers advance up the LIFT ladder, they become eligible for additional career and leadership opportunities that will not require them to stop teaching. In this way, LIFT allows teachers to plan a long and rewarding career in DCPS, filled with new challenges and opportunities for growth.
2. **Reward Experience:** LIFT highlights the achievements of successful teachers who have demonstrated a long-term commitment to DCPS. The highest stage of the LIFT ladder is reserved for teachers who have dedicated many years to the district.
3. **Broaden Recognition:** LIFT honors and rewards not only Highly Effective teachers, but also those who have earned Effective ratings. For the first time, these educators are recognized for their performance, becoming eligible for additional compensation and reduced IMPACT observations.
4. **Increase Career Stability:** In most cases, a teacher's LIFT stage will not change on a yearly basis. Furthermore, once teachers reach a particular stage, they cannot move backwards on the ladder — they may only advance further. These aspects of LIFT bring an important level of stability to a teacher's career in DCPS.

Teacher Leadership Innovation (TLI) Program:

Developing meaningful teacher leadership opportunities has been a primary focus for the Teacher Effectiveness team in DCPS, which is also an important strategy for retaining outstanding teachers.

First launched in the spring of 2013, the Teacher Leadership Innovation (TLI) program is a unique opportunity for teachers and school leaders to design and implement innovative teacher leadership roles that allow a teacher to spend part of the day teaching and part of the

day leading other teachers in the building. Designed at the school level, with support from central office, the TLI roles are specifically tailored to a school's needs and priorities.

By leveraging funding from the US Department of Education's Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant to add additional staff to a school's budget, teachers serving in the TLI roles receive release time that is dedicated to their role as a leader.

In the 2014-15 school year, 20 schools and 58 teacher leaders are participating in TLI, and the cohort will expand to include nearly 30 schools and more than 100 teacher leaders for the 2015-16 school year. Participants receive extensive professional development and coaching to ensure success in their teacher leadership roles. Development includes participation in school visits, regular professional development focused on adult leadership, and one-on-one leadership coaching from national experts in the field.

TLI aims to:

- Provide the training and resources for excellent teachers to take on leadership roles that are meaningful, sustainable, and that address a top school priority
- Expand the reach of excellent teachers to improve school-wide student achievement
- Increase the amount of feedback that teachers receive and encourage a culture of collaboration
- Improve teacher retention by providing a career pathway that does not require leaving the classroom

Support and Development:
To maximize the effectiveness of teacher-leaders, TLI offers the following resources.

- **Release time** from the classroom for teacher-leaders to fulfill leadership responsibilities
- **$2,500 stipend** to recognize the expanded role taken on by teacher-leaders
- Support for TLI teams includes two weeks of intensive **summer training**, ongoing **professional development**, one-on-one **coaching**, and **opportunities to connect** with teacher leaders and school leaders across the cohort around common challenges and best practices.

Enhanced Teacher Recognition: DCPS has also taken steps to make the District a place where great teaching is honored and rewarded in unprecedented ways – including an annual formal gala at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts at which DCPS recognizes the winners of the annual teaching awards. Each year, seven highly effective teachers are honored with the Excellence in Teaching Award (which comes with a $10,000 prize), and twenty highly effective teachers are honored with the Rubenstein Award for Highly Effective Teaching (which comes with a $5,000 prize). Award winners are selected by a central office panel that reviews hundreds of nomination letters submitted by school leaders, teachers, parents, and community members.

DCPS Hiring Fair:

DCPS hosts "hiring fairs" and invites program graduates and candidates for teaching from outside the District. The first hiring fair includes only the 40 lowest performing schools. These schools serve the highest rates of poverty and minority populations and they get the first chance to choose and hire teachers for the next school year.

DCPS Early Offer Letters:

DCPS has adopted specific practices in the past two years to extend District-level early offers beginning in February to high-potential teacher candidates, especially for hard-to-fill subject areas. These offers guarantee a position with the District but not with a specific school, as the exact vacancies may not yet be confirmed. As there is a financial risk associated with guaranteeing positions in advance of confirmed vacancies, these early offers can only be extended to a small subset of candidates in subject areas where there high demand is confidently anticipated.

Promising Practices: Two Rivers Public Charter School

Two Rivers Public Charter school is consistently among the schools with the lowest teacher attrition rates in DC, which makes it an interesting test case for observing promising practices. A deeper look in the schools staffing practices reveals that the focus and areas of strength that the school introduces and that potentially drive the high retention rate, are well aligned with the DC teacher and leader identified root causes.

Teacher Pipelines

The hiring process in Two Rivers has three main characteristics: (1) Principal autonomy; (2) Diversity; and (3) Rigor. The Executive Director has complete autonomy with regard to deciding on the hiring process and choosing teachers for her school. According to the Executive Director, she interviews the candidates herself and has complete discretion in prioritizing the skills that she looks for in each particular candidate.

Being a charter school, Two Rivers is not restricted to licensed candidates. They consider the experience of the candidate, whether he or she will fit to the school vision and whether they will contribute to the staff collaboration. The Executive Director follows a rigorous approach where she only hires candidates that meet the necessary bar and appears to be a good fit, even at the cost of not filling positions for longer periods of time.

Also, the Executive Director tries to create a diverse staff and combine teachers from different backgrounds. This includes diversity between different preparation programs. Candidates from alternative programs such as Teach for America are joining older and more experienced candidates from traditional programs to form a diverse staff.

Leadership and Support

The school operates under a very clear vision that is implemented by the Executive Director, the school leadership team, the teachers and the students. Teachers meet with leadership regularly and take part in shaping the school direction and in making decisions. There is a general feeling among staff that teachers are listened to.

Staff collaboration and moral is at the focus of the school leadership. The first week of the orientation following the summer break is dedicated for team building in order to create structured and solid processes of collaboration.

The other component that stands out when examining the school is support for teachers. Each grade level in Two Rivers is matched with a "partner" administrator that supports the teachers on instructional and other issues. New teachers are personally partnered with an administrator who supports them. This partnership, along with the collaboration with other staff members, ensures that teachers always have a place to go to seek advice and support with the challenges that they face.

Promising Practices: OSSE- Charter Sector Collaboration

OSSE's Model State Teacher Evaluation System:

The DC model teacher evaluation system, a collaborative project between OSSE, Thurgood Marshall Academy, and thirteen additional charter LEAs, was launched in the fall of 2014. Over the course of the 2014-15 school year, these stakeholders have convened as a planning committee with monthly meetings consisting of professional development, language norming, and critical feedback regarding aspects of teacher evaluation. The goal of the project is to create a set of procedures and implementation tools for a model evaluation system. The model system will be piloted and available for optional use by DC LEAs during the 2015-16 school year.

The creation of this model is an important step for improving equitable access in the District. Improving LEAs practice in evaluating effective teaching is a condition for targeted policies on retention of effective teachers. In addition, a successful implementation of this model that would include wide participation of multiple charter LEAs, would improve DC's ability to compare teachers across LEAs.

Teacher Pipeline Strategies

A core challenge discussed identified through this work is that of creating a "teacher pipeline" that would ensure that high-need schools can attract, hire, and retain great teachers. Included below are potential strategies that can help answer the question: How can we prepare, supply, recruit and place our best teachers in the schools that need them the most?

Key Strategy #1: Educator Licensure Reform

As the District's only local education agency (LEA) whose teachers are required to obtain a state-issued license in order to teach, DCPS has identified the existing teacher licensure framework as one of the most significant barriers to ensuring that all students have equitable access to excellent teachers. DCPS has highlighted the current input-based, rather than outcomes- focused, teacher licensure requirements, noting that they allow some unproven teachers to obtain a full license to practice while denying licensure to others who have already demonstrated their effectiveness in the classroom.

OSSE has taken these concerns seriously. As a part of its equitable access plan, OSSE will propose regulations to reform the way in which educator licenses are issued in the District of Columbia. These proposed revisions will be anchored in the following two premises:

1. Removal of overly burdensome requirements that prevent candidates who have demonstrated effectiveness from obtaining DC teacher licensure.
2. Expanded pathways by which those who seek to teach in DC can obtain a license.

OSSE anticipates that with these revisions, school principals and human capital managers will be better able to:

- Attract effective teachers who teach out of the state and are not licensed in DC.
- Retain effective teachers that entered the profession with temporary licensure.
- Obtain flexibility to hire professionals that can more effectively meet student needs, such as elementary school reading specialists who lack high school licensure but are needed in high schools with students who read at the elementary level.

Key Strategy #2: Educator Preparation Program Quality Analysis

The quality of the programs that produce new teachers, leaders, and other school professionals is a critical factor in ensuring that every student in the District of Columbia has access to high-quality and effective educators. Through a framework of periodic onsite reviews and annual reporting, OSSE currently monitors the quality of Educator Preparation Providers (EPPs) to ensure that they are preparing individuals who are ready to take on challenging yet rewarding roles in District of Columbia schools and classrooms. However, it does not currently have data on the degree to which programs are effective in preparing teachers for the workforce, either based on outcomes or on participant and employer perceptions. It also does not have market data, such as supply and demand both overall and/or for particular content areas. OSSE will

explore whether additional data and information could be helpful to LEAs and schools in thinking about their pipeline and to providers in improving the quality of their programs and what mechanisms could be effective in gathering that information.

Teacher Retention Strategies

The strategies identified in this section are designed to answer the question: how can we get our best teachers to stay at the schools that need them the most? OSSE's analysis revealed that strong principal leadership and educator supports for addressing behavioral challenges and reducing disruptions to instructional time were key factors that impact whether teachers stay at high-need schools.

Key Strategy #1: Expanded Professional Development: Behavioral Health and Trauma-Informed Care

The System of Care model is a federally-supported framework aimed at helping jurisdictions coordinate and leverage resources to prevent and intervene early to address behavioral health challenges that impact children and families. Through grant funding provided by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, in 2010, the District of Columbia was granted an opportunity to plan, develop and implement a DC System of Care Model. The funding, a $5M grant over the course of five years, supports the operation, expansion, and integration of the System of Care through the creation of sustainable infrastructure which allows for the delivery of, and access to, services and supports to children and youth with socio-emotional and behavioral concerns. The model also promotes the implementation of systemic changes in policy, financing, services and supports, training and workforce development, and other areas that are necessary for expanding and sustaining the system of care approach. The following are the five focus areas for DC's System of Care:

- Improved access to mental health services
- Family engagement; parent and youth peer support
- Functional, trauma-informed assessment utilizing the Child Adolescent Assessment Scale and the Preschool and Early Childhood Functional Assessment
- Integration of Behavioral Health and Primary Care (DC Collaborative for Mental Health in Pediatric Primary Care)
- Reinvestment strategies to promote sustainability

From the initial phase, OSSE has been an active partner at all levels of the planning, development, and implementation of the DC System of Care. Through this plan, OSSE will specifically target the behavioral health resources and training described above to high-need schools.

Key Strategy #2: Principal Leadership Rubric and Related Guidance

Research shows that school leaders who serve student populations with high rates of students in poverty and minority students, and schools with a history of low performance (e.g. Priority

schools under the DC ESEA waiver) require a unique set of competencies to lead school turnaround. To address this, OSSE created a new state tool for hiring turnaround principals. This tool emphasizes the unique skillset and competencies that are required to lead high-need schools and that are different from the leadership of any other school. The tool was based on research in this field, particularly the work by Public Impact on competencies of high performing turnaround leaders.[20]

This tool will be available to all LEAs but is specifically designed to assist LEAs in evaluating whether principals of high-need schools, specifically schools identified as Priority schools under the DC ESEA waiver, have the necessary skillset to lead specific turnaround efforts. This tool is intended to help LEAs ensure that our highest-need schools are led by effective principals, a key requirement for teacher retention.

The draft tool is available in Appendix D.

Key Strategy #3: Targeted Teacher and Leader Support through the Learning Support Network for High-Need Schools

To address the instructional needs of the District's lowest performing schools which also serve the highest poverty population, OSSE has established the Learning Support Network (LSN). The LSN ensures rigorous support mechanism for educators at these schools. Through OSSE, each participating school receives an experienced coach that works to support the school leadership and teachers on both instructional and non-instructional matters, pursuant to the identified root cause of the schools' low performance. The coach then works with the principal to develop a plan to implement these supports. The school is then given a "line of credit" to support implementation of the plan. The line of credit is a small, but completely flexible, amount of funds made available to the school. These funds are typically used to support professional development opportunities in order to increase the rigor of the instruction at the school.

The principals, who all lead high-poverty, low performing urban schools, have access to ongoing professional development opportunities and meet quarterly to address the unique challenges of their schools collaboratively.

During the first year of implementation, eight of the District's lowest performing schools have participated in the LSN. The main focus has been placed on supporting instruction and enhancing classroom behavioral management.

OSSE will continue to utilize the LSN to support teachers and leaders at the lowest performing schools classified via the ESEA Waiver.

DC's Next Steps: Facilitating a "Deep Dive" into Root Cause Analysis

The District of Columbia Staffing Data Cooperative

OSSE recognizes the need to engage in a deeper root cause analysis with a range of data in order to develop more targeted strategies for ensuring that every child has access to great teachers. As a result of gaps in available staffing data, schools, Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and OSSE are unable to ensure that the District is developing and implementing strategies aligned to identified root causes. Therefore, OSSE is hoping to launch a city-wide data partnership to address these challenges.

This new initiative, the DC Staffing Data Cooperative, will consist of a partnership between LEAs that serve high-need populations, OSSE, and a partner research organization. Through this initiative, partners will create a safe, collaborative environment to collect and examine rich staffing data together. The data would give participants the insights needed to improve the hiring and retention of teachers at their schools.

While most of this work would take place at the LEA level, meeting these goals is dependent on a joint effort between LEAs and OSSE, as a comprehensive approach will require an in-depth examination of teacher pipelines, preparation programs, licensure, working conditions across sectors and other city-wide issues.

Project Objectives

The objectives of this proposed project are twofold. Specifically, the Cooperative would:

- Further identify the root cause(s) of staffing challenges in high-need schools through high-quality data collection and analysis, and
- Enable LEAs and OSSE to develop and implement data-driven strategies to improve students' access to effective teachers across all the schools in the District of Columbia.

Theory of Action

Proposed Methodology

The Collaborative would:

- Create a partnership between a number of LEAs that have schools that serve high poverty students (both public and public charter) and seek to broaden their insights on how to attract and keep great teachers.
- Partner with a professional research organization to perform data collection and analysis. While OSSE will fund the project, the research partner, and not OSSE, will store and analyze the data.
- Comprehensively analyze teacher level data around pipelines, preparation, placement, retention, development, evaluation, compensation and other relevant aspects of the teaching profession in DC.
- Draw inferences and conclusions that LEAs can use to develop data-driven staffing strategies. The purpose of the data collection will be for internal use only.

The LEAs participating in the collaborative will receive funding to systematically collect data related to teacher pipelines and retention that would be analyzed by partner research organizations. This analysis will be shared with the LEAs and OSSE.

Section 6: Plan Implementation and Evaluation

This plan is only the first step in a District-wide effort to reduce inequitable access to great educators. The engagement and consultation processes that preceded the completion of this plan must be the foundation that supports additional consultation and reflection.

As OSSE joins with LEAs to collect and analyze staffing data more systematically, stakeholders will have multiple opportunities to reconvene to discuss the findings and their implications. Furthermore, as OSSE implements the strategies that are outlined in this plan, it will be critical to track implementation to identify success as well as areas in need of mid-course correction.

OSSE will annually report on the implementation of the strategies and on the equity gaps described in this plan. The annual report will include:

- Progress on each of the strategies listed in the table below.
- Data on the rates of access to first year teachers, highly effective teachers, below effective teachers, ineffective teachers and highly qualified teachers, across categories of school poverty, minority, performance, and city ward. The calculations will be completed in the same way as those that were used to compile the data in Appendix C, allowing OSSE to observe trends and determine whether the strategies are effective and the gaps are closing.
- OSSE is also working to improve the quality of DC staffing data by creating a combined longitudinal teacher database. By establishing consistent in identifiers across current snapshot datasets, OSSE will have greater capacity to analyze staffing data which may lead to additional insights, and additional root causes discussion with teachers and leaders, which OSSE will report on annually.
- OSSE will report on additional metrics determined to be most meaningful via the work of a data collaborative. The data collaborative approach described in the "strategies" section is aimed at providing schools, LEAs and the state with the capacity needed to examine and report on metrics that are identified as the root cause of the equity gaps, which may include the quality of teacher preparation programs, the effectiveness of state policies such as licensure regulations, and the effects of leadership and working conditions on teacher retention.

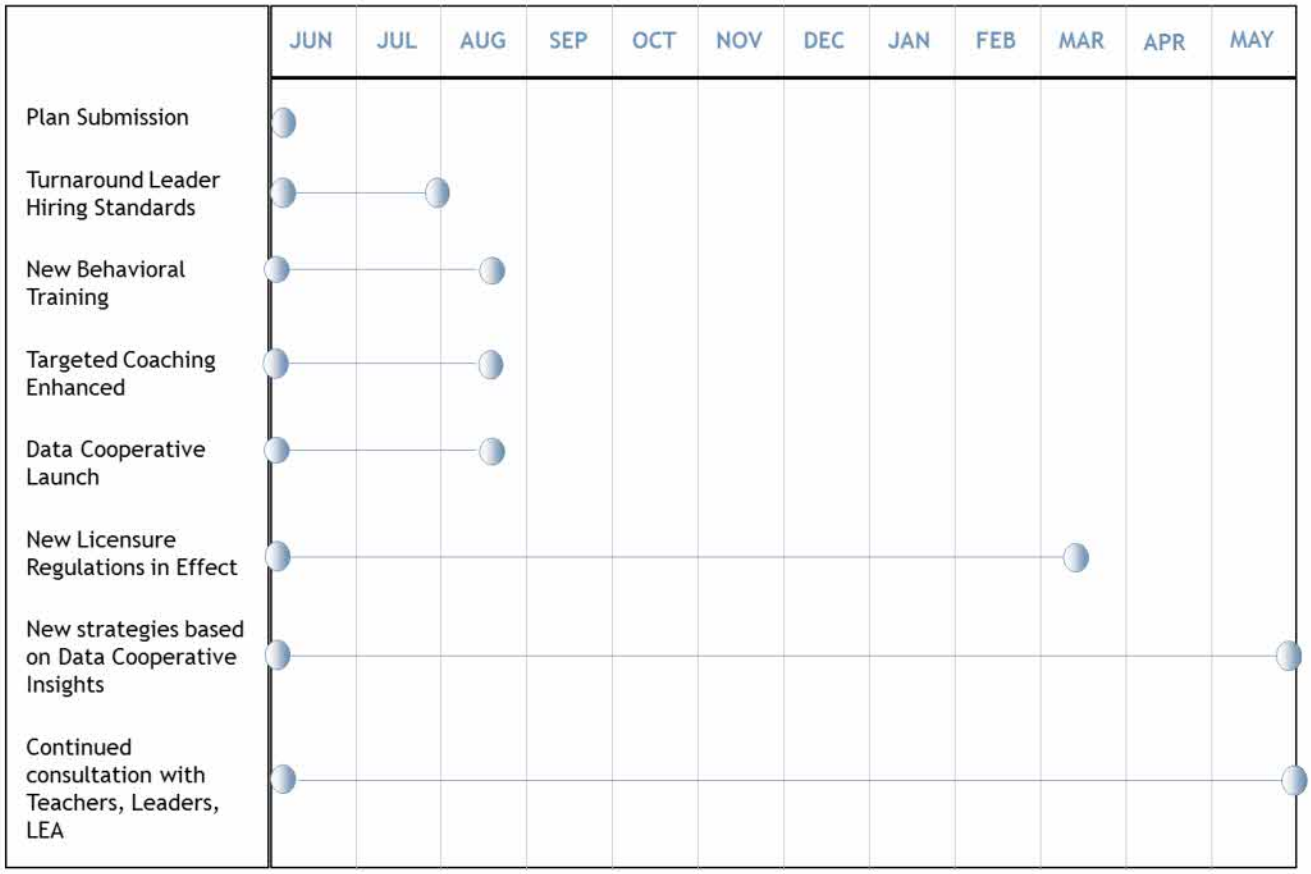
Upon approval of the plan, OSSE will reconvene stakeholders, particularly teachers, school and LEA leaders that serve high-need populations, to launch implementation. OSSE will then monitor progress related to key strategies on a quarterly basis.

Root Causes, Key Strategies, and Measures of Success

The below table aligns the selected strategies with identified root causes, and maps out implementation milestones:

Identified Root Cause	Strategy	Measures of Implementation (Outputs)	Owner	Target Date
Licensure	Licensure Reform	No highly effective teacher will be denied teaching in DCPS due to licensure regulations	OSSE	Spring, 2016
Teacher Working Conditions	Effective Professional Development: Behavioral Support	Targeted, evidence based, trauma-informed behavioral health training will be available to high-need schools	OSSE	Fall, 2015
Working Conditions	Learning Support Network	Targeted coaching support driven by a school-specific root cause analysis process	OSSE, LEAs, School Leaders	Fall, 2015
Leadership	Turnaround Leader Hiring Standards	All LEAs receive Turnaround School Principal Competency Rubric guidance and technical assistance and evidence on principals competency submitted for all Priority schools	OSSE, LEAs	Fall, 2015
Teacher Pipelines and Working Conditions	The District of Columbia Staffing Data Cooperative	Interested LEAs with high-need schools and OSSE launch new staffing data cooperative	OSSE, LEAs, partners	Fall, 2015
All Identified Root Causes	Continued teacher, leader and LEA consultation	OSSE will continue to engage teachers and leaders to discuss additional data findings and monitor strategies implementation	Accountability, Performance and Support Team	Throughout the year

First Year Implementation Timeline



End Notes

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http://publicimpact.com/teachers-leaders/competencies-of-high-performers/

Appendix A: Equitable Access Consultation Log

Date	Engagement Type	Number of Participants	Participants
1/22/2015	Discussion with LEA Representatives	25	LEA Leads on Policy and Data
1/23/2015	Internal Root Cause Discussion	8	Agency Equitable Access Team and Leadership
1/26/2015	Kickoff of the DC ESEA Waiver Renewal and Equitable Access Processes	53	Teachers, Leaders, LEA Representatives
1/29/2015	DC ESEA Waiver Renewal and Teacher Equity Plan Webinar	26	Teachers, Leaders, LEA Representatives
1/29/2015	Equitable Access Discussion with the Private School Advisory Committee	15	Private School Leaders
02/05/2015	Equitable Access Public Meeting-Adopting a Vision for the Plan	17	Teachers, Leaders, LEA Representatives and Public
02/10/2015	Equitable Access Webinar-Vision for the Plan	20	Teachers, leaders, LEA Representatives and Public
02/12/2015	Community Meeting-Ward 2	18	Teachers, Parents
02/19/2015	Community Meeting-Ward 5	20	Teachers, Parents
02/21/2015	Community Meeting-Ward 6	20	Teachers, Parents
02/23/2015	Principals Root Cause Discussion	16	School Leaders
02/24/2015	Teachers Root Cause Discussion	25	Teachers
02/25/2015	Community Meeting-Ward 1	10	Teachers, Parents
02/26/2015	Community Meeting-Ward 5	11	Teachers, Parents
02/26/2015	Community Meeting-Ward 1	23	Teachers, Parents
02/26/2015	Community Meeting-Ward 4	10	Teachers, Parents
02/27/2015	Equitable Access Stakeholder Engagement Recap Webinar	20	Teachers, Leaders, LEA Representatives
02/27/2015	Community Meeting-Ward 1	5	Teachers, Parents
03/04/2015	Community Meeting-Ward 8	25	Teachers, Parents

03/07/2015	Community Meeting-Ward 8	24	Teachers, Parents
03/10/2015	Teacher Root Cause Discussion-Washington Teachers' Union	75	Teachers
03/12/2015	Teacher Root Cause Discussion	16	STEM Teachers
03/16/2015	School Leader Root Cause Discussion	8	Leaders of DC Highest-need Schools
05/05/2015	Teacher Root Cause Discussion: Ballou STAY High School	15	Teachers in a High-need School
05/18/2015	Webinar: Sharing Equitable Access Plan Draft with the Public and Stakeholders		LEA leaders, Public

Appendix B: Invitee List-Equitable Access Plan Public Engagement

Education Partners

- The DC State Board of Education
- The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education
- Washington Teachers Union

Local Education Agencies

- Private Schools Advisory Committee
- Public Charter LEAs
- The DC State Board of Education
- The District of Columbia Public Schools

School Level Personnel

- Leaders of the lowest performing DC schools
- Leaders of traditional public and public charter schools
- Teachers of traditional public and public charter schools
- Pupil personnel service staff- DCPS

Community Members

- Parents and Students (through multiple community meetings)
- 21st Century School Fund
- Advocates for Justice and Education (AJE)
- Alliance for Excellent Education
- American Youth Policy Forum
- Association for Career and Technical Education
- Capitol Hill Public Schools Parent Organization (CHPSPO)
- Children's Law Center
- Communities in Schools
- Data Quality Campaign
- DC Action for Children
- DC Chamber of Commerce
- DC Lawyers for Youth (DCLY)
- DCPS Principals Union
- Eaton School Home and School
- Fight for Children
- Friends of Choice in Urban Schools (FOCUS) DC
- Greater Washington Board of Trade
- Greater Washington Urban League

- Janney School Parent-Teacher Association
- Murch School Home and School
- School Reform Now
- Stoddert School Parent Association
- The Education Trust
- Tubman ES Parent-Teacher Association
- Ward 1 Education Collaborative
- Ward 2 Education Network
- Ward 4 Education Alliance and Senior High Alliance of Parents, Principals, and Educators
- Ward 5 Council on Education
- Ward 7 Council on Education
- Ward 8 Council on Education

Appendix C: Comprehensive List of Indicators and Equity Gaps

Indicator	Low-income School	Not Low-income School	High Minority School	Not High Minority School	Low Performing School	Not Low Performing School	N Size (Schools)
% 1st Year	8%	5%	8%	7%	8%	7%	167
% Highly Effective	23%	48%	25%	63%	20%	30%	196
% Below Effective	28%	10%	26%	8%	31%	24%	196
% Ineffective	5%	2%	4%	1%	3%	4%	207
DCPS% Highly Effective	25%	56%	20%	58%	20%	39%	103
DCPS% Below Effective	30%	10%	48%	23%	31%	21%	103
% HQ Elementary	85%	89%	85%	91%	82%	88%	97
% HQ Secondary	86%	94%	87%	100%	77%	91%	87

Indicator	Low-income School	Not Low-income School	High Minority School	Not High Minority School	N Size (Schools)
% 1st Year (using USED Data)	16%	14%	15%	13%	220

Appendix D: DRAFT Turnaround School Principal Competency Rubric

LEA Name _____ School Name _____

Principal Name _____

Was this principal (please check one):

- ❑ A New Hire
  - ◯ New to the LEA ◯ New to the school
  - ◯ Date of Hire _____
- ❑ Retained

Please describe the hiring process of this principal:

_____

Cluster	Competency	Description	Behavioral Examples	Competency Ranking (1-low, 5 high)	Process of Obtaining Evidence
Driving for Results	Achievement	• Set challenging goals	• Choose challenging goals based on cost-benefit analysis • Take significant risk to launch new venture or attempt unlikely change		
	Initiative and persistence	• Reach high standards despite barriers	• Take multiple actions to ensure success • Bend organization norms to accomplish work objective		
	Monitoring and assertiveness	• Do more than is expected • Hold others accountable	• Publically monitor performance against standards • Confront people with performance problems • Rid organization of low performers		
	Planning ahead	• Plan to derive future benefits	• Identify future need and opportunities		
Influencing for Results	Impact and influence	• Act with the intent of affecting the perceptions, thinking, and actions of others	• Engage in a complex set of maneuvers with many people to obtain desired impact • Obtain resources and people needed to perform		

Cluster	Competency	Description	Behavioral Examples	Competency Ranking (1-low, 5 high)	Process of Obtaining Evidence
Influencing for Results	Team leadership	• Assume authoritative leadership to benefit the organization	• Motivate staff and stakeholders with charismatic communications		
	Developing others	• Influence with the intent to increase other's effectiveness	• Provide training to develop new skills • Give full responsibility for challenging work to others • Promote others as a reward for development		
Problem Solving	Analytical thinking	• Solve and simplify complex problems • Break things down in logical ways • Recognize cause and effect	• Understand several possible causes and results of events • Break apart complex problem or process into categories and steps		
	Conceptual thinking	• See patterns in seemingly unrelated things	• Analyze difficult problem from different perspectives • Use complex data to make decisions • See most important issue in complicated situation • Crystallize complex data into simple findings		
Showing Confidence to Lead	Self-confidence	• Stay focused, committed, and self-assured • Believe in ability to accomplish tasks	• Express positive feelings about challenging assignments • Make decisions despite disagreement with those in power • Acknowledge areas for self-improvement		