

Thank you for Tuesday's meeting. Here are my follow-up questions:

1. Your proposed legislation provides for an 18 member "Interagency Collaboration...Commission" with a broad mandate. The commission is authorized to hire staff etc. What will be the size of the staff and budget to carry out the commission's functions?

The Commission will function with a very small staff, under 5 FTEs, and a small budget. The Commission's main function will be to coordinate strategic functions among other agencies, rather than to perform those functions directly. As outlined in the legislation, key child-serving agencies will all contribute to the development of a seamless continuum of care for District children through the blending and braiding of local and federal funds.

2. The same question is raised with respect to the Office of Ombudsman for Public Education and the CEO of the Public Education Facilities...Authority.

(The three entities represent new institutional players on the education scene. You must have ball park figures on staffing and materials costs.)

The Office of the Ombudsman will have between 3-5 staff members, and an overall budget of less than \$500,000.

The Facilities Authority would operate with a very lean staff, probably under 20 core staff, and would rely heavily on contractors to carry out many of the functions related to the school modernization program.

3. Is it true, as reported in a new analysis of the mayor's plan by the Council of the Great City Schools that your plan:

- a. does not address the issue of low and stagnant student achievement?*
- b. relies on Janey's Master Education Plan to improve academic achievement?*
- c. does not set measurable goals or benchmarks for academic achievement?*
- d. does not set accountability measures for the mayor and your leadership team?*
- e. does not address the issue of standards, and training of teaching staff on content and use?*
- f. does not address professional development?*
- g. has no mechanism for getting reforms into the classroom?*
- h. has no stated strategy for lowest performing schools and students?*

The District of Columbia Public Education Reform Amendment Act sets the framework for delivering public education services in the District – who is responsible and accountable for what, and establishing the best structure to deliver those services. I do not believe specific student performance targets or academic achievement benchmarks should be legislated, and I am not aware of any other state that legislates its academic plan.

That said, I disagree with the notion that the bill does not address student performance issues. What is needed in the District is not another analysis, study, list of recommendations, or plan.

We have all of those, including the superintendent's Master Education Plan, and they all identify the same basic list of issues that need attention: Redesign teaching, curriculum, and testing to raise student achievement; Strengthen the workforce to attract and retain high quality teachers and principals; Improve central office efficiency and support functions; Review special education program management and build system capacity; Repair facilities to be decent and conducive to learning; and Create community-wide engagement.

What has been missing is implementation, and specifically the accelerated implementation that responds to the urgency our students, parents, community members – we all – feel when we think about our public schools. Under this legislation, I am the one person ultimately held accountable for whether our children are receiving a quality education. The structure proposed by our legislation takes a comprehensive approach at establishing a framework by which the Mayor can effect change. A comprehensive approach includes more than just putting the Mayor in charge – it includes ensuring that the school system can focus on its main mission of educating students, establishing clear separation of mission between state and local functions, creating a framework through which other city services are marshaled to support public education, and ensuring clear accountability throughout the public education system. So in short, I disagree with that analysis. My bill addresses all of these issues by creating the framework and the accountability structure in which we can actually, finally move reforms forward.

4. It also has been suggested that your plan:

a. does not reduce decision-making layers, and in fact would make decisions harder to coordinate.

b. makes decision-making more top-heavy.

c. lacks a clear vision about the direction of the system, and that it relies Janey's Master Education plan.

d. is likely to turn over school leadership again...adding to the problem of frequent leadership changes in the school system.

e. would have state and local school functions report to the deputy mayor, thus creating the same conflict of overlapping state and local functions as present.

f. would give line-item authority to the council thus adding to a cumbersome budget decision-making process.

My research shows that in jurisdictions that have a mayoral governance model, superintendent tenure is longer than in cities with an elected-board governance structure.

My bill does not re-create the same conflict between state and local functions that we currently have. At DCPS, we have people with both state and local responsibilities not only working out of the same office, but often they are the same person – there is an inherent conflict with having so many staff wearing two hats, performing two functions, when one of those functions is an oversight function for the other. The bill eliminates that issue. The District is unique in that both the state and local are all within one jurisdiction, and ultimately the Mayor, as governor of the state, is responsible for both. Our legislation, however, places responsibility for state and local

functions in separate offices with separate reporting lines. The Chancellor reports directly to the Mayor. The Chief State School Officer, the SEO, would report to the Deputy Mayor. I feel there is sufficient space created between those two accountability lines to enable the SEO to do its job as the State Education Agency for the District.

As to the issue regarding Council line-item authority, my intention from the outset has been to make DCPS a subordinate agency to the Mayor, just like police, health, human services, and fire. All of these services are important and essential to the residents of the District, and the budget process for these agencies with respect to the Council is the same across the board. I am proposing to give the Council the same level of responsibility that they currently have and exercise with other city agencies.

The analysis also states that no major city school system in the country has a facilities authority with the level of independence proposed in your plan. Even New York and L.A. have explicit coordination and sign-off requirements with the school system.

The Facilities Authority proposed by the legislation is independent from the school system bureaucracy – the Authority can focus on the buildings and the Chancellor can focus on teaching and learning, the core mission of DCPS. The Authority would work closely with the Chancellor. Decisions about which buildings to modernize and when or which schools to consolidate or co-locate with other entities, for example, would be made by the Mayor. The Authority would not make changes to the Facilities Master Plan and would not make educational decisions. The legislation explicitly leaves those decisions to the Mayor and Chancellor.

As stated earlier, we are structuring the Authority to operate as a portfolio management model. The objective of the Authority is to represent the interests of the District government, as the owner of the assets, and the school system, the client being served. This client-centered approach will enable the school system to be served by the facilities agency, without the responsibility of managing it.

It states that your proposed changes would do little to fix the instructional, budgetary, and operational problems that external analyses have identified.

I would refer to my earlier answer – our legislation creates the framework through which change can occur. The current structure does not serve reform efforts, but instead acts as an impediment to reform and change – the record speaks for itself.

Also that your proposal lacks a specific plan of action.

Again, the legislation is not intended to be a specific plan of action. That is not something that is legislated. My administration is developing plans for action, such as the draft action plan we submitted to the Council earlier this week to address special education issues. We will share those with the Council and the public as we move forward.

the Council of Great City Schools report also presents test scores in school districts under mayoral control (Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, New York_ and school districts not under mayoral control (Atlanta, Charlotte, Houston, Los Angeles, Sand Diego). They show little difference between the two categories.

We believe that a governance model that holds the Mayor accountable is the best model for the District at this time. If the question is whether a mayoral governance model in general leads to better results than a governance model like the one we have currently, then testimony given during the Council hearings supports what we have contended throughout this debate – there is no silver bullet to school reform, and mayoral authority alone is not a panacea. Some other jurisdictions have seen great results, while others have not. Whether the governance model works or not depends on the circumstances of that city, as well as the other components of reform that are implemented concurrently.

The Mayor is, however, ultimately accountable for whether children are educated in our city. The structure proposed by the District of Columbia Public Education Reform Amendment Act takes a comprehensive approach at establishing a framework by which the Mayor can effect change. A comprehensive approach includes more than just putting the Mayor in charge – it includes ensuring that the school system can focus on its main mission of educating students, establishing clear separation of mission between state and local functions, creating a framework through which other city services are marshaled to support public education, and ensuring clear accountability throughout the public education system.

Our own study completed during the transition, which has been shared with the Council and is available on the District's website, indicated several positive results in cities where a mayoral governance model has worked. For example, in those cities, superintendent tenure is longer than in cities with an elected-board governance structure. Also, the number of students who are proficient in reading and math rose in Boston and Chicago, and Boston has made significant progress in shrinking the achievement gap. In New York City, they have seen gains on the NAEP tests in reading that outpace peers in other large cities. And both New York City and Boston have achieved better results with high percentages of students living in poverty than other big cities.

I would like your response to all of the points in this email asap.