

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
COMMITTEE REPORT**

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20004

TO: All Councilmembers

FROM: Councilmember David Grosso, Chairperson
Committee on Education

DATE: May 5, 2016

SUBJECT: Committee on Education Fiscal Year 2015 Oversight Report

The Committee on Education conducted a series of performance oversight hearings throughout the months of February and March related to the fiscal year 2015 performance of the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, the Office of the State Superintendent for Education, District of Columbia Public Schools, the D.C. Public Charter School Board, Public Charter Schools, the State Board of Education, and the District of Columbia Public Library System. This report identifies the Committee’s findings as well as information related to performance of the first quarter of fiscal year 2016.

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INTRODUCTION

Established under the Home Rule Act of 1973, the Council of the District of Columbia is the legislative branch of local government for the District of Columbia. The purpose of the Council is to provide oversight of the Executive and independent agencies that constitute the District government. In order to fulfill its responsibilities, the Council is organized into the following seven standing committees: Committee on Education, Committee on Health and Human Services, Committee on Housing and Community Development, Committee on Business, Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, Committee on Finance and Revenue, Committee on Transportation and the Environment, Committee on the Judiciary, and Committee of the Whole. Each of these committees are responsible for dedicated subject areas.

Pursuant to Council Rules for Council Period 21, the Committee on Education is responsible for all matter related to PK-12 public education and the following agencies and programs:

- District of Columbia Public Schools
- Office of the State Superintendent of Education
- District of Columbia Public Charter Schools
- District of Columbia Public Library
- District of Columbia Public Charter School Board
- Non-Public Tuition
- Special Education Transportation
- D.C. State Board of Education
- Deputy Mayor for Education
- Bullying Prevention Task Force
- Common Lottery Board
- Community Schools Advisory Committee
- Higher Education Licensure Commission
- Healthy Youth and Schools Commission
- Public Charter School Credit Enhancement Fund Committee

In February and March of each year, the various Council committees conduct a series of oversight hearings on the performance of the agencies under their purview during the prior fiscal year. This process gives the Council and the public an understanding of the departments' achievements and shortcomings and how each agency carried out Council and Mayoral initiatives. The oversight process also informs the development of the budget for the next fiscal year.

This report is a compilation of the information gathered by the Committee on Education during the fiscal year 2015 (FY15) oversight process.

A. OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY MAYOR FOR EDUCATION

The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (“DME”) is responsible for developing and implementing the Mayor's vision for academic excellence and supporting the education-related District Government agencies in creating and maintaining a high quality education continuum from early childhood to K-12 to postsecondary and the workforce. The three major functions of the DME include: Overseeing a District-wide education strategy; Managing interagency and cross-sector coordination; providing oversight and/or support for the following education related agencies: DC Public Library (“DCPL”); DC Public Schools (“DCPS”); Office of the State Superintendent for Education (“OSSE”); D.C. Department of Parks and Recreation (“DPR”); Public Charter School Board (“PCSB”); and University of the District of Columbia (“UDC”).

On March 2, 2016, the Committee on Education held a performance oversight hearing on the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education. Twenty-one public witnesses testified at the hearing on various issues including truancy and the funding plans for individual schools. The Deputy Mayor for Education, Jennifer Niles, began in the role as DME in January 2015 and reported on actions by the office and agencies that she has oversight on during the previous year.

FISCAL YEAR 2015 OPERATING BUDGET

Fund Title	Approved Budget	Revised Budget	Expenditures
Local (100)	6,917,249.00	3,061,356.21	2,850,082.23
Federal Grant (200)	-	-	-
Federal Payments	-	-	-
Dedicated Taxes (110)	-	-	-
Intra-District (700)	-	-	-
Private Donations (450)	-	-	-
Private Grants (400)	-	-	-
Special Purpose (600)	-	-	-
Grand Total	6,917,249.00	3,061,356.21	2,850,082.23

During the fiscal year 2015 performance oversight process, the Committee on Education focused on the management of key programs and initiatives with the DME. Below is a summary of major findings from the hearing:

Citywide Education Planning

In June 2015, the National Academy of Sciences released its report titled *An Evaluation of Public Schools of the District of Columbia: Reform in a Changing Landscape*, a five-year evaluation of public education in the District since the passage of the Public Education Reform Amendment Act of 2007 (“PERAA”). A few months later, the first year results from Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (“PARCC”) tests were publicly released. The PERAA report and the test scores coupled together, shed light on the state of public education in the city and gave policy leaders tangible indicators of where there are weaknesses in the District of Columbia’s public education system. The Committee had hoped these would refocus the District’s conversation on what needs to be achieved in the next phase of education reform in the city.

During the performance oversight hearing, the Committee inquired with DME Niles specifically about Mayor Bowser’s plan for driving the conversation about what the goals should be and how the city leaders are going to meet them. The DME stated that this spring the Mayor intends to announce her “District Priority Goals” for 2016, which includes a set of initiatives related to public education. They are as follows:

1. Prepare all children for kindergarten;
2. Make public middle schools the premier choice for students and families;
3. Eliminate the achievement gap;
4. Graduate all students ready for college and career; and
5. Equip all adults with the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and post-secondary education.

While these are certainly goals that the Committee supports in principle, there is concern that not only are these goals general in nature (i.e., no one would argue that all children should be prepared for kindergarten or that we should eliminate the achievement gap), but there are no benchmarks or numbers associated with the goals for which to measure progress. The Deputy Mayor stated that these initiatives are just scaffolding and there are plans in greater detail to explain how these goals will be achieved as part of a larger plan that the Mayor has for the District of Columbia. Chairperson Grosso continued to ask specific questions about how the DME is acting as an overseer for the agencies and emphasized that he believes she has the power to instruct or convene groups in order to take immediate action to address the needs of students and families. The Chairperson stated that he looks forward to seeing the Mayor’s finalized plan and will be asking further questions about what budget and legislative implications there will be for the Council to consider.

The Committee agrees with the Deputy Mayor that there needs to be a citywide approach to education and that planning is key. However, the Committee believes that the approach needs to have specific and clear deliverable and measurable goals in order for the Committee and the public to be able to hold the agencies accountable for their successes or failures. The Committee looks forward to learning more about the District Priority Goals and anticipates its release, hopefully, in the coming months.

Cross Sector Collaboration Task Force

As the entity that is also responsible for the Master Facilities Plan and ensuring alignment with the Capital Improvement Plan, the Committee believes the DME holds a critical role in supporting, planning, and prioritizing facilities development- not just for D.C. Public Schools- but public charter schools as well. During the FY14 performance oversight hearing and the FY16 budget hearing, the Committee heard a litany of public testimony regarding the challenge of maintaining facilities in the public charter school sector. Charter school leaders and advocates expressed concerns about their ability to fund and support critical facility needs. The Committee also heard from community members desperate for some coordination in facility siting between DCPS and public charter schools. They voiced their frustration about the lack of community input and engagement in the process for the disposition of buildings. Like the Committee, the public viewed this as a role for the DME. During last year’s performance oversight and budget hearings, the DME assured the public and the Committee that the newly formed Cross Sector Collaboration Task Force would convene around this topic of discussion. In fact, the Committee’s FY16 budget report, we recommended “that the Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force lead by the DME convene immediately to begin working out business rules and best practices for the disposition of

buildings, the right to first offer for public charter schools, and Managing the Request for Proposals (“RFP”) Process for Excess Facilities.”¹

While there was certainly a sense of urgency from the public and the Committee for the Task Force to be formed quickly, unfortunately, the DME did not officially announce the members of the Task Force until December 2015. At the time of the FY15 performance oversight hearing, the Task Force had only met once.² The Task Force is charged to develop clear and fair recommendations for the Mayor on how to improve the coherence among and collaboration across public schools to improve effectiveness and efficiency. They will focus efforts on recommending strategies and solutions for the identified goals that will have the most impact on improving student outcomes for all public school students in the District of Columbia.³ The Committee is pleased to see that developing a framework for coordinating processes on school openings, closings, and facilities planning is among the goals of the group, but it is skeptical that the Task Force will truly achieve any meaningful outcomes on this topic given its current pace of work. Chairperson Grosso asked about the deliverable dates and noted that two years for recommendations is a long time. DME Niles assured the Committee that there will be reports out of the Task Force every six months. The Committee looks forward to hearing about the Task Force’s progress later this year. The Committee also hopes that the Task Force will be open to discussing more issues than what are currently outlined on their agenda. For example, during the oversight hearing, public witnesses testified that they would like the Task Force to develop collaborative, city-wide approaches for safe passage for children to get to and from school safely.⁴

Local Education Agency (“LEA”) Payment Initiative

In 2013, the Council passed legislation proposed by the PCSB and the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (“OCFO”) to place heavier weight on the first quarterly payments to ensure more accurate and timely payments to charter schools. During the performance oversight hearing, the Committee asked for an update on this effort to better streamline payments. To date, this initiative is still a work in progress. The DME stated that the PCSB has vastly improved its methodology for forecasting enrollments, which ensures that schools do not have to “scramble” for money later in the year. The DME stated that her office has been meeting with the PCSB and OCFO on the new Local Education Agency (“LEA”) payment initiative and she anticipates that it will be finalized in August 2016 and ready to be implemented for the school year 2016-2017. DME Niles also noted that she believes this new initiative will help to alleviate tensions between traditional public schools and public charter schools over equal funding. The Committee will continue to monitor the rollout of the LEA payment initiative and looks forward to discussing with LEAs during the FY16 performance oversight hearings next year about how well they feel it is working.

School Facilities

The Committee often hears from charter school operators and advocates that the process for the disposition of former DCPS buildings to charter schools is cumbersome and often unclear. Interestingly, the Committee also hears the same complaints from DCPS parents and advocates. At the hearing, the

¹ Committee on Education FY16 Budget Report.

² <http://dme.dc.gov/collaboration>

³ <http://dme.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dme/publication/attachments/Meeting%201%20Slide%20Deck.pdf>

⁴ The Chairperson inquired also about what the DME is doing currently about safe passage. She reported that there is a Transportation Committee in her office that has a Safety, Transit, and Data subcommittees that convene monthly meetings. The Committee asked for updates and information about the work and plans being done through the Transportation Safety Subcommittee.

Committee asked for an update on the request for proposal process since the 2014 performance oversight hearings, and what buildings have been released since that time. Currently, the Cross Sector Collaboration Task Force convened by the DME is not covering this issue, which is not something the Committee or the public anticipated would happen. DME Niles responded that they are working on the update to the Master Facilities Plan (“MFP”) and the annual addendum that is required by law. She said the District just released four buildings for proposals and she believed that the system was working. However, clearly there is a disconnect occurring. The Council tried to bring some clarity to the process with the passage of the “Comprehensive Planning and Utilization of School Facilities Act of 2013,” but perhaps that law needs to be revisited and refined. Chairperson Grosso asked that the DME collaborate with other education sector leaders to assess the impact of the law in practice and send the Committee any recommendations for changes.

Chairperson Grosso also raised concerns regarding the DME’s responses to the Committee’s pre-hearing questions about environmental safety audits of school buildings. There has been significant recent national news coverage about the federal investigations in Michigan, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and other states about high levels of lead exposure found in contaminated drinking water and lead-based paint, and, consequently in children and adults.⁵ As the city discusses modernizing public buildings (i.e., schools, libraries, and recreation centers), the aesthetics get the most time, attention, and money. However, Chairperson Grosso stated that he wanted to highlight and address immediately the responses received from specific oversight questions from the Committee about an update on environmental and safety audits. In the DME’s written response, it was noted that Lead Risk Assessments were completed in all pre-1978 buildings “occupied or commonly used by children 6 and under...and lead stabilization work is in progress.” The Chairperson asked how it was possible that we have spent billions of dollars on modernizations, but now we are having to look back and retest the pipes for lead. The DME stated the District Department of the Environment (“DDOE”) is the agency that handles annual lead sampling and that their list is online. She also stated that she would get back to the Committee with the list of schools being remediated.

Truancy and the Truancy Task Force

During the FY14 performance oversight hearing and at the FY16 budget hearing, DME Niles discussed her office’s role in combatting chronic absenteeism by reinvigorating the interagency Truancy Task Force. The Task Force met monthly during the summer and fall of 2015 and was comprised of both government and public education stakeholders. Chairperson Grosso thanked her for work on expeditiously getting the process moving forward and for all of the effort put into the Task Force. It resulted in the drafting and introduction of Bill 21-0508, the “School Attendance Clarification Amendment Act of 2015” that was introduced by Chairperson Grosso and Chairman Mendelson on December 1, 2015. The legislation amends the District of Columbia’s compulsory school attendance laws to make changes based on the interagency lessons learned over the past two years. The Committee on Education held a hearing on the bill on January 21, 2016 and unanimously approved the bill on February 24, 2016.⁶ The DME stated that the overall focus was to examine what gets children to attend school, who is absent and why, and if current governmental programs actually track and enforce attendance. The Committee is pleased

⁵ See reports at: <http://www.cnn.com/2016/01/05/health/flint-michigan-water-investigation/>;
<http://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2016/02/04/report-18-cities-in-pennsylvania-with-higher-lead-exposure-than-flint/>;
<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/10/nyregion/elevated-lead-levels-found-in-newark-schools-drinking-water.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Fnyregion&action=click&contentCollection=nyregion®ion=rank&module=package&version=highlights&contentPlacement=8&pgtype=sectionfront>.

⁶ See Committee Report at <http://lims.dccouncil.us/Download/34948/B21-0508-CommitteeReport1.pdf>

that the work of the Task Force has resulted in actual change and looks forward to continuing this work on attendance in the coming months.

B. OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT FOR EDUCATION

The mission of the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (“OSSE”) is to remove barriers and create pathways so District of Columbia residents receive an excellent education and are prepared for success in college, careers, and life.

OSSE serves as the District of Columbia’s State Education Agency (“SEA”). In this role, OSSE manages and distributes federal funding to education providers and exercises oversight responsibility over federal education programs and related grants administered in the District of Columbia to ensure quality and compliance.

In addition to its responsibilities as the SEA, OSSE has responsibility for developing and setting state-level standards and annually assessing student proficiency, ensuring universal access to childcare and pre-k programs, and providing funding and technical assistance to LEAs and adult education programs in achieving objectives. OSSE further ensures that the District of Columbia collects accurate and reliable data, and assesses meaningful interventions to ensure quality improvements and compliance with state and federal law. OSSE also administers the budgets for Special Education Transportation; Non-Public Tuition; and District of Columbia Public Charter School payments.

The Committee on Education held the FY15 performance oversight hearing for OSSE on February 17, 2016. Superintendent Hanseul Kang testified on behalf of the agency.

FISCAL YEAR 2015 OPERATING BUDGET

Fund Title	Approved Budget	Revised Budget	Expenditures
Local (100)	137,830,734.00	138,298,503.00	137,856,219.00
Federal Grant (200)	210,067,626.00	229,938,004.00	189,848,451.00
Federal Payments	45,000,000.00	30,000,000.00	28,049,629.00
Dedicated Taxes (110)	4,266,000.00	8,407,766.00	4,847,921.00
Intra-District (700)	38,188,288.00	41,492,338.00	40,917,528.00
Private Donations (450)	-	-	-
Private Grants (400)	117,147.00	-	-
Special Purpose (600)	448,127.00	1,123,005.00	467,706.00
Grand Total	435,917,922.00	449,259,615.00	401,987,453.00

During the fiscal year 2015 performance oversight process, the Committee on Education focused on the management of key programs and services within the agency. In addition, the Committee underlined a number of general management and agency-wide issues that deserves attention at OSSE. Below is a summary of major findings from the hearing:

Leadership Transitions and Timelines

OSSE experienced leadership transition during FY15. Jesús Aguirre served as the State Superintendent from October 2013 until December 2015. Dr. Amy Maisterra, the Assistant Superintendent of Elementary, Secondary, & Specialized Education was named the Interim State Superintendent in January 2015 and served in that role until March 2015 when Hanseul Kang joined the agency. The Council confirmed Kang’s nomination on June 2, 2015.

Since its inception as an agency in 2007, constant staff turnover has hindered OSSE's ability to be effective. Providers and grantees often speak about how their point-of-contacts frequently change, making it difficult to navigate the inner workings of the agency and receive assistance when needed. Additionally, LEAs say they are sometimes discouraged by the shifting priorities and lack of follow-through on initiatives. And the Committee is frustrated by OSSE's inability to plan, set a timeline, and actually meet the milestones and goals it sets for itself.

Here are just a sampling of the issues the Committee brought up during the hearing. In February 2014, OSSE's Residency and Enrollment Office took on residency investigations for the DC Public Charter School Board. However, OSSE did not offer this service to DC Public Schools, but in the FY15 budget responses to the Committee, OSSE stated: "Our goal is to centralize all residency investigations within OSSE once the residency regulations have been adopted, which should be by the beginning of FY15." Two years after OSSE issued a noticed of proposed rulemaking, these regulations still have not been finalized. Also, one of OSSE's goals for FY15 was to revise and implement new childcare licensing regulations, but OSSE did not issue a notice of proposed rulemaking until December 24, 2015, which means this goal was not achieved. Additionally, in FY12 OSSE was supposed to update and expand its quality rating framework for early childhood programs, also known as the QRIS system, which launched in 2000. There has been no update to the QRIS to date, and the antiquated system that is tied to our childcare subsidy rates is in desperate need of an upgrade. Moreover, in FY14 OSSE began the development of an Early Warning System, which helps schools identify students at-risk for failing to meet key outcomes associated with academic success by isolating factors predictive of dropouts. OSSE told the Committee that it needs course specific data from LEAs in order to transition from an analytical project to one that can be used for program evaluation and funding purposes. Superintendent Kang stated at the performance oversight hearing that, to date, the conversations with LEAs to get that data have not begun. Furthermore, in June 2014, OSSE released a report that included several recommendations on curbing out-of-school suspensions and expulsions. One of OSSE's recommendations was for their agency to collaborate with stakeholders to finalize discipline-related regulations that establish basic standards for discipline. In February 2015, OSSE assured the Committee on the record that either regulations or guidelines were coming. However, there has been no movement on these regulations to date.

The Committee understands that leadership and staff transitions happen, but the responsibilities of the agency cannot completely come to a halt because people have left an organization. The Committee is encouraged by the work of Superintendent Kang in her first year, but remains concerned about the retention of OSSE's staff and its impact on the culture and effectiveness of the agency. We hope that this will be addressed moving forward. The Committee will continue to hold OSSE accountable for meeting the timelines and goals it sets for itself, especially the ones discussed above, which are critical.

Accountability for Student's Academic Progress

In June 2015, the National Academy of Sciences released its long-awaited report titled *An Evaluation of Public Schools of the District of Columbia: Reform in a Changing Landscape*. This was a five-year evaluation of public education in the District since the passage of mayoral control in 2007. One of the conclusions of the evaluators was the following: "...the governance structure with respect to learning opportunities is diffuse: no one entity has both the responsibility and the authority for monitoring the provision of education and supports for students, particularly those at risk for school failure, across both the DCPS and charter schools." During the hearings on the report, both the public and leaders of the education cluster agencies agreed that OSSE should be the agency with this responsibility. Thus, the

Committee was pleased that OSSE's team that works on homeless education program has developed a series of measurable goals in which to monitor progress with this population. The first evaluation is supposed to be completed this summer. During the hearing, the Committee asked if OSSE was also doing the same kind of evaluations of special education students and English Language Learners ("ELL"), two subgroup populations that have struggled in terms of academic progress. OSSE reported that similar evaluations would be done for special education in April of each year and for ELL students the release will be aligned with the fiscal years.

Data & Student Privacy

In March 2015, OSSE experienced a data breach when the agency inadvertently released personally identifiable student data in response to a Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA") request. The disclosed data includes student names, dates of birth, grade levels, gender, race, ethnicity, English Language Learner classification, non-public attendance, special education status, school of attendance, reason for suspension/expulsion, dates of suspension/expulsion, truancy status, removal to an alternative setting, and unique student identifiers. Social security numbers were not part of the data. This data breach occurred not even 48 hours into Superintendent Kang's tenure at OSSE. At the time she stated that she would launch a thorough review of the agency's data response process to ensure there are no further incidents of this nature in the future. Further, she said they would be working with the Deputy Mayor for Education and other education agencies in the District as part of a taskforce that will engage data privacy experts to ensure that D.C. becomes a leader in protecting student data privacy. The Committee is deeply concerned about OSSE's progress in this regard.

In pre-hearing questions submitted to OSSE in December 2015 the Committee asked OSSE to outline OSSE's protocol to ensure that student data is protected for data requests and FOIA requests. OSSE responded, "Before sending it to requestors, data go through a minimum of three stages of quality assurance and security checks, including peer review, approval from the Assistant Superintendent for the Divisions of Data, Accountability, and Research, and final approval from the Superintendent." However, a week before OSSE's performance oversight hearing the Committee was alerted to another data breach at OSSE involving special education information for approximately 12,000 students – the second in less than a year. During the hearing, the Committee asked the Superintendent how this happened in light of the new protocols. Superintendent Kang stated that they were still continuing an internal investigation into what happened, but since the documents were not part of FOIA request or traditional data request (it was included in a document responding to a pre-performance oversight hearing question from the Committee on Education), OSSE's protocol was not fully applied.

The Committee is troubled by OSSE's response on this matter. Any time data leaves the agency there should be a process to guard against human error and ensure that student privacy is always protected. OSSE's Assistant Superintendent for Data, Accountability, and Research position has also been vacant since December 31, 2015. The Committee suggests that OSSE provide trainings to all relevant staff at OSSE on data systems, student privacy, and security. Superintendent Kang noted that the leadership team had gone through training; however, the Committee notes that it is not merely the leadership team at OSSE that has access to personally identifiable student information. This training should also be a part of the on-boarding for new staff that will have access to sensitive information.

Early Learning

The performance of OSSE's Division of Early Learning ("DEL") was a central topic during the hearing. Several public witnesses testified and submitted written statements on their concerns about the proposed new child care regulations; the existing child care subsidy; and OSSE's endeavor on a new cost estimation model that will inform any rate increases, prompt payment with regard to grants and reimbursements, and offer timely and proactive communication by OSSE on new regulations or initiatives. Many of these issues were also raised during the Committee's oversight roundtable on early learning and early care in the District of Columbia in November 2015. There were three issues raised during the performance oversight hearing that the Committee would like to highlight: the Quality Rating Improvement System, DEL engagement efforts, and early learning workforce development.

Quality Rating Improvement System

OSSE's Quality Rating Improvement System ("QRIS"), also known as Going for Gold, evaluates and classifies early childhood programs in the District of Columbia that receive the child care subsidy. This quality rating system initially launched in 2000. OSSE officials stated that the system would be updated and expanded to include all early childhood programs in FY12. That did not happen. In 2013, the Committee was told during the OSSE performance oversight hearings that the new QRIS would be piloted January 2014-June 2014, with full implementation starting thereafter. That did not happen. In OSSE's pre-hearing responses to the Committee's questions, OSSE stated that the pilot of the new QRIS would now happen in FY16.

During the hearing, Chairperson Grosso asked OSSE about the incessant delays with updating this system. Superintendent Kang and the Assistant Superintendent for Early Learning both acknowledged the issue and stated that OSSE is working hard to achieve the timeline outlined in the documents provided to the Committee this year, but the Committee is not confident. OSSE stated during the oversight hearing that the QRIS pilot will begin in April 2016. However, when asked how many providers had agreed to participate as of February 17, OSSE had no response. While the Assistant Superintendent for Early Learning stated that they had identified 24 centers they would like to participate, the invitation letter was still in draft form and had not yet been sent out. They were still in conversations with DC Public Schools and public charter schools about including a sample of their early childhood classrooms in the pilot. Furthermore, it is not clear to the Committee from the hearing whether OSSE is working in collaboration with representatives from DCPS, public charter schools, and the community based organization sector to come to a full agreement on what indicators should be included in the new QRIS.

The Committee supports a more robust QRIS system that helps parents and families navigate and evaluate early learning options in the District of Columbia. We acknowledge that many of the starts and stops with regard to updating the QRIS has likely been a result of leadership and staff turnover at OSSE. However, the Committee expects OSSE to adhere to the implementation timeline. This will certainly be a topic that the Committee will follow-up on at OSSE's budget oversight hearing in April.

DEL Engagement Efforts

Over the past year, the Committee has heard concerns from many early learning providers regarding OSSE's lack of proactive communication or engagement with the entire childcare market when it comes to regulation or policy changes. During the hearing OSSE stated that there are almost 500 early learning providers in the District of Columbia and about half participate in the childcare subsidy program. While

those in the subsidy program do receive more frequent communications from OSSE, their primary method of engagement with the rest of the providers is through regular monthly newsletters. The Committee believes that this is not enough communication, and a recent issue has made it quite apparent that OSSE needs to vastly improve its efforts in this regard.

One of OSSE's goals for FY15 was to revise and implement new childcare licensing regulations. These regulations encompass all early learning providers, including private providers. On December 24, 2015, OSSE issued a notice of proposed rulemaking, but it was not officially posted until January 5, 2016. The hearing on the proposed childcare regulations was set to occur the following week. While the Committee is concerned that OSSE did not achieve yet another goal in terms of timeline, it is even more troubling that OSSE would release new regulations that would impact the entire childcare market on Christmas Eve. This action certainly does not lend itself to the idea that OSSE wants to actively engage the entire market on the proposed changes, especially since one of these changes requires that within three years all licensed childcare development centers must participate in the new QRIS regardless of whether or not they receive the child care subsidy.

Additionally, when the Committee asked OSSE during the performance oversight hearing about its engagement efforts with private providers regarding the new QRIS, OSSE did not provide much of a response. The Committee is aware that at one point there was a working group that included private providers engaging on indicators to include on QRIS rubrics for the varying types of early learning programs (i.e., Headstart, Montessori, charter schools, etc.); however, the Committee was told that after one meeting the email address for the OSSE contact stopped working. As OSSE continues to review the comments submitted for the new childcare regulations and the ongoing rollout of the new QRIS, the Committee encourages OSSE's Division of Early Learning to greatly improve its capacity to more proactively communicate and engage with the early learning community. The Committee will follow up with OSSE on the implementation of the QRIS pilot at the budget oversight hearing in April.

Early Learning Workforce Development

During the hearing, several witnesses brought up the issue of the existing child care subsidy rates and its link to compensation and program quality. The Committee sees the value in having this conversation, but believes the District must also seriously explore the quality and capacity of the existing early learning workforce to truly handle the market demand. OSSE has taken some steps to address this issue. During the hearing we learned that OSSE has started a high school career and technical education program ("CTE") on early childhood to attempt to capture students' interest early on in their education. OSSE also funds scholarships for individuals interested in pursuing credentials and degrees in early learning. In FY15, OSSE funded 130 scholarships for in-service college course and higher education programs. OSSE also funded individual scholarships for more than 200 professionals in pursuit of the Child Development Associate ("CDA").

While the Committee is encouraged by OSSE's financial investment in this type of workforce development, the Committee is concerned that the agency is not fully tracking the outcomes of the scholarship recipients or providing additional assistance to help individuals complete the program. During the hearing, Chairperson Grosso asked about the number of individuals who were successful in completing the programs due to the funding OSSE provided. OSSE later provided the information to the Committee and shared that the scholarship for the in-service college course and higher education programs is managed by a grantee through T.E.A.C.H, a nationally recognized degree and wage enhancement program model. The scholarships for the CDA is similarly outsourced via grant. The Committee encourages OSSE to take

a more proactive role in monitoring these partnerships. Further, as the District continues its conversation about quality and compensation, OSSE should craft a plan for moving more individuals from just a CDA credential to an Associates and Bachelor's degree.

Grants Management

As the state education agency, one of OSSE's primary functions is to distribute federal and local grants to LEAs, community based organizations, and other groups. Over the past several years, OSSE has made great strides in reducing the amount of times that federal grant funds lapses by ensuring that more critical resources get to schools and the students that benefit from them. In FY12, over \$7 million in federal funding lapsed. In FY13, \$1.2 million lapsed, in FY14, \$913,000 lapsed. In FY15, less than \$50,000 lapsed, representing .03% of OSSE's total expiring federal grant awards. This progress is a great testament to the work of the grants management team and OSSE's most recent Chief Operating Officer, who managed OSSE's Office of Grants Management and Compliance for the past several years. They have put a lot of effort into engaging schools, LEAs, and providers, and ensuring a successful launch of the Enterprise Grants Management System, which has made it much easier for OSSE and grantees to access and track key financial information regarding awarded grants.

OSSE has also taken steps to better align the availability and disbursement of grant funds with the school year cycles and needs. The Committee was pleased that OSSE was able to plan and administer the grant competitions for the Early Literacy Grant and the Community Schools Grant in the late summer and early Fall so that funds could be distributed in October at the start of the fiscal year. One of the Early Literacy grant recipients testified that due to the expediency of OSSE making the funding available, they were able to expand their literacy intervention program in five schools and launch in eight new schools. They were able to hire 26 full-time literacy tutors who are now reaching an additional 500 at-risk students. It is the Committee's hope that OSSE will be able to maintain the progress they have made in grants management.

C. DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The mission of the District of Columbia Public Schools (“DCPS”) is to provide a world-class education that prepares all students, regardless of background or circumstance, for success in college, career, and life.

The DCPS budget is organized into three main divisions: Central Office, School Support, and Schools. Each of these three divisions is broken down into separate activities, all of which align to both the agency’s spending plan and its organizational chart.

The Committee held the performance oversight hearing for DCPS on February 18, 2016 in Room 500 of the John A. Wilson Building and then again on March 4, 2016 in Room 412. Chancellor Kaya Henderson presented testimony on behalf of the agency.

FISCAL YEAR 2015 OPERATING BUDGET

Fund Title	Approved Budget	Revised Budget	Expenditures
Local (100)	702,144,630.00	695,396,928.05	695,368,022.80
Federal Grant (200)	38,458,045.53	55,634,671.70	51,777,578.91
Federal Payments	14,999,999.21	-	-
Intra-District Funds (700)	104,257,099.78	109,773,971.73	109,775,956.73
Private Donations (450)	-	161,607.95	88,966.27
Private Grants (400)	-	1,012,870.52	928,316.10
Special Purpose (600)	7,543,916.04	7,348,995.96	7,047,711.38
Grand Total	867,403,690.56	869,329,045.91	864,986,552.19

During the fiscal year 2015 performance oversight process, the Committee on Education focused on the management of key programs and services within the agency. Below is a summary of major findings from the hearing:

Educational Equity and Rigor

High Schools

Over the past couple of years, the Committee has heard concerns from students in a number of settings about the lack of educational equity when it comes to academic rigor across DCPS’ comprehensive high schools. Their criticisms were not only leveled at the high school level, but across DCPS as a whole. According to their testimony, the instructional and extracurricular opportunities that students received varied greatly depending on where the school was located. Across several budgets, DCPS has sought to address equity by increasing teacher allocations and resources where necessary to provide a more equitable student experience. The focus of targeted investments has changed over the years. In FY14 investments were targeted at elementary grades, in FY15 middle grades received investments, and in FY16 high schools saw investments. During the public witness testimony for DCPS, the Committee heard from several high school students on this issue. Although DCPS made fiscal investments in high schools, students still raised concerns, especially when it comes to Advanced Placement (“AP”) courses.

DCPS required every comprehensive high school to offer at least 6 AP courses in the 2015-2016 school year, including one in each of the four content areas and AP Psychology. The schools will be required to have a minimum of 8 AP courses for the 2016-2017 school year. Students expressed frustration that they are enrolled in an AP math class that DCPS says is “college-level,” yet they are learning things again that was taught in Algebra I. Students were critical of AP course enrollment policies, or lack thereof, resulting in students unprepared for AP courses being placed in those classes thus disrupting the experience for students who are ready. Further, although this initiative to increase AP offerings was driven by equity concerns, two students (one from Coolidge High School and the other from Wilson High School) testified about their vastly different experiences in their AP English Language courses. Whereas one student’s experience was defined by rich seminar discussions on the text, the other student’s course was about rote memorization.

The Committee raised this issue with Chancellor Henderson. While DCPS has sought to infuse their high schools with more AP courses, it is clear that is not the title of the course that is the problem, but rather the content that is being taught and the methods of instruction. DCPS’ results on AP exams speak to this. DCPS reported that last school year (SY2015-16), 52% more students took AP exams compared to 5 years ago, which is certainly laudable except when you look at the percentage of students who actually passed the exam and was awarded college credit as a result. In 2015, only 23% of DCPS students scored a 3, 4, or 5 on the AP English Literature exam; 24% on the AP English Language exam; 31% on the AP U.S. History exam; and 18% on the AP Environmental Science exam. These results beg the question of how well this initiative is actually working.

Chancellor Henderson candidly stated that this continues to be an issue and that she is deeply concerned about equity of rigor. She said one of the challenges is that not everyone believes our students can learn at a high level, but she also admitted that DCPS has made assumptions that every teacher is automatically prepared to teach a college level course. DCPS has made AP Summer Institutes and workshops available to their AP teachers and for the first time they have AP Academies internally that pull the AP teachers together to share best practices. In terms of the criticism about who is enrolled in AP courses, Chancellor Henderson stood firm in her belief that even exposure to AP classes and the exam is helpful for students to prepare them for college. While the Committee is certainly supportive of exposing students to new challenges and opportunities, it is sensitive to the concerns raised by students that in the quest to expose more of their peers to college-level material, they themselves are not being challenged as a result. This is an area that needs more focus and work from DCPS. Equity in rigor cannot be achieved in course titles only. Students are discerning and truly are the final arbitrators of whether or not DCPS is successful in its quest to bring equity across its schools. At this point, they have very clearly determined that DCPS is not there yet.

Cornerstone Initiatives

Towards the end of FY15 (which is the beginning of school year 2015-2016), DCPS rolled out its Cornerstone Initiative which is designed to provide every student equal access to rigorous educational experiences through assignments developed by top DCPS teachers. Anchored by high-impact content-specific instructional methods, Cornerstones culminate in a memorable and relevant learning experience or student product such as an oral presentation or musical piece. For example, the Cornerstone assignment in physical education for second graders this year was learning how to ride a bicycle. With help from the District Department of Transportation and private donors, DCPS purchased 1,000 bikes that will rotate to every elementary school by the end of the school year. Of course, the bike assignment peaked the public’s interest, but Councilmember Allen asked how the initiative was going overall in terms of bringing rigor

to the classroom. Chancellor Henderson stated that they cannot make the assignments fast enough and Cornerstones have truly taken learning beyond the classroom. As part of Cornerstones and the DCPS curriculum, third graders learn about the city and their culminating assignment is to make a travel brochure about a landmark location. One mom of a third grade student had never been to the Lincoln Memorial, but that was the location her kid picked for the travel brochure project and so they went together for the first time.

Middle Grades and the “Diversity” Question

For the 2014-2015 school year (FY15), one of DCPS’ stated foci was improving the middle grades experience, rigor, enrollment, and overall academic achievement. Middle grades are viewed as an important transitional period, which can propel a student’s academic, social-emotional growth, and overall development. Historically, however, middle grades were where DCPS saw its largest dip in enrollment. Many families did not feel as though the experience was as academically challenging and enriching as the offerings of many public charter schools that begin enrollment in the fifth grade. The Middle Grades Initiative was created to provide support to schools and assist in ensuring the middle grades experience was stimulating. Although DCPS has made the investments and maintained them this school year, DCPS is still not seeing a turnaround in terms of middle grade enrollment. One example of this conundrum is the matriculation of students from Brent Elementary School to Jefferson Academy Middle School in Ward 6. By all accounts, Brent’s student body reflects the neighborhood – two-thirds of the students are white, about one-third are black and Latino. But by fifth grade, the demographics change; and then at Jefferson, Brent’s feeder school for middle grades, the student body is almost entirely black.

Chairperson Grosso raised this issue during the performance oversight hearing because the Committee is concerned about what this situation means for our public education system and city as a whole. Additionally, the Committee wants to know how it can support DCPS in its efforts to reverse this trend. While some Brent Elementary School or Amidon-Bowen Elementary School families say the decision not send their children to Jefferson is about the state of the building or “school culture” or “rigor,” we know there are some other seemingly unspoken issues of race and class at play. The Committee has heard from residents about their desire for diversity in schools but it is concerned that the demographics of our schools may never match the rich diversity of the District’s neighborhoods if the fear of a student being the only race in a classroom persists.

Chancellor Henderson was candid about the issue of diversity in middle grades during the hearing, and said that she and her staff cannot solve it alone. She stated: “Diversity is not a problem that schools solve, it’s a problem that communities solve. [...] We’ve been okay living in the same neighborhoods, but not sending our kids to the same schools.” The Committee agrees with her assessment. She went on to state that middle grades are the fastest improving grade band in DCPS. This fact is not widely known; therefore, the Committee encourages DCPS to modify its approach to recruitment when it comes to middle grades. While some schools have tried to increase the opportunities for prospective families to speak to current parents and teachers through open houses and tours, the Committee hopes that Central Office will encourage school communities to think creatively and recruit in non-traditional settings. These changes would not only help spread the word about academic rigor and successes in middle grades at DCPS, but also create opportunities to dispel myths or notions that may persist. Even with these changes, the Committee acknowledges that this is a cross sector issue. Chancellor Henderson pointed out that there are 6,500 middle grade students in DCPS and 6,900 in public charter schools, but there is absolutely no coordination as the Public Charter School Board can just keep opening more schools. She said, “as long as we have more choice, we never have to confront the perception issue” for schools that have high

numbers of students of color enrolled. The Committee hopes that the Cross Sector Taskforce launched by the Deputy Mayor for Education will tackle the issue of middle grades because this is not only a DCPS issue.

Ninth Grade Academies

In school year 2013-2014, DCPS established targeted Ninth Grade Academy programs at eight comprehensive high schools across the District to help first-year ninth grade students successfully complete the first year of high school. The Committee is impressed with the outcomes observed by DCPS in the first two years of implementation. Ninth Grade Academies have increased academy student promotion rates 21%, from 54% in SY12-13 to 75% in SY14-15. In Ninth Grade Academy schools, the first year ninth grade promotion rates increased 18 percentage points from 54% in SY12-13 to 72% in SY14-15. Furthermore, academy schools decreased truancy rates by 11%, from 75% in SY12-13 to 64% in SY14-15. In-seat attendance has increase 6% which is the equivalent to students attending an average of 23 more days in school. The average number of suspensions in academy schools decreased 22%, from 70% in SY12-13 to 48% in SY14-15. During the hearing, the Committee asked whether DCPS has considered replicating the work and approach of Ninth Grade Academies into middle grades. Chancellor Henderson stated that they are always thinking about how we can put our arms around our students and support them, so they are definitely considering how they can make this model work for middle grades. The Committee looks forward to seeing that develop and seeing the full impact of Ninth Grade Academies as DCPS continues to track the outcomes of the cohorts throughout their high school careers. In FY15, DCPS posted its highest graduation rates on record, 64%, an 11% increase over 2011. With the work of the Ninth Grade Academies, the Committee hopes to see that number continue to grow.

School-Based Mental and Behavioral Health

The Committee has been focused on school-based mental and behavioral health needs of students for the past few years. The need is particularly prevalent in middle grades. The 2012 Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that 28% of D.C. middle school girls seriously thought about killing themselves, 16% actually made a plan, and 13% attempted to do so. There has also been an uptick in terms of parents contacting the Committee and the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education about bullying. Thus, the Committee is pleased that in FY15 DCPS made additional investments to address the social and emotional needs of middle grades students. Each school received \$100,000 for social workers, psychologists, Deans, and wrap care coordinators. Even with these investments the Committee is concerned that we are not meeting the full need of each school. The Committee heard from some behavioral health staff that their caseload is so high with regard to students who have mandated services that they do not always have time for the student who are not in crisis or causing trouble, but seriously needs help.

Currently DCPS employs 75 school-based psychologists and 16 Central Office psychologists, which is not enough for every school to have one. In DCPS' pre-hearing responses to the Committee, they reported a number of schools that had staffing gaps for behavioral and mental health in general. This is certainly a concern of the Committee considering some of the gaps include occupational therapists, physical therapists, and speech/language pathologists. During the hearing, Chairperson Grosso asked DCPS about their capacity in this regard. Chancellor Henderson reported that while DCPS has partnered with organizations like the Howard University School of Social Work, there is a supply issue when it comes to recruiting school-based mental and behavioral health staff. As a result, DCPS has begun having some schools share staff and the Department of Behavioral Health also provides help from time to time. Additionally, Chancellor Henderson stated that she believes the regulations and mandates that prevent

some behavioral health staff from working with any student in need are relics from the past when we were overly concerned about services for special education students. She stated it is now time to reexamine our approach. The Committee wholeheartedly agrees with the Chancellor and will be looking for ways to continue to retool the District's approach to school-based mental and behavioral health.

English Language Learners

DCPS has experienced an influx of immigrant students. The enrollment of English Language Learners ("ELL") has increased by 27% in last five years, which is outpacing the growth of the general education population for DCPS. However, the amount of federal Title III funds that DCPS receives (\$520,000) does not seem to make a dent in providing support to schools. New students, many of whom are unaccompanied minors, are arriving each day. Last year, 200 ELL students showed up at DCPS schools after the October 5 enrollment count. During the performance oversight hearing, Chairperson Grosso asked Chancellor Henderson about enrollment trends for this school year. Chancellor Henderson reported that DCPS has 5,700 ELL students enrolled to-date and that 470 enrolled after the October 5 count. The schools with the highest increases were Brightwood Education Campus (Ward 4), Dorothy Height Elementary School (Ward 4), Roosevelt High School (Ward 4), Truesdell Education Campus (Ward 4), Raymond Education Campus (Ward 4), Cardozo Education Campus (Ward 1), and Coolidge High School (Ward 4). This growth rate is astonishing, particularly since much of it is concentrated in Ward 4 schools.

Even with this influx of students, DCPS says that they have the funding necessary not just from federal sources, but also from local sources. The Committee, however, is deeply concerned about the performance and achievement of the ELL subgroup student population. On the school year 2014-2015 Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers ("PARCC") assessment, 12% of DCPS' third through eighth grade ELL students scored college and career ready on the English Language Arts exam and 19% scored college and career ready on the Math exam.⁷ 5% of DCPS ELL high school students scored college and career ready on the PARCC English II exam and only 4% of DCPS ELL high school students scored college and career ready on the PARCC Math exam. While no single data point tells the entire story (for example, every year DCPS graduates about 500-600 students from ELL status into general education population, so they do not get credit for those students in terms of end of year assessments), the Committee is convinced that in order for DCPS to be successful they need to invest targeted resources for certain subgroup populations, especially ELL students. The Committee suggests that DCPS work with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education and the Deputy Mayor for Education to determine a better payment system that ensures DCPS is receiving funding for all of the students it serves throughout the year.

Safe Passage and School Climate

Over the past year and half, the Committee has seen an uptick in terms of parents contacting us about bullying. At an oversight hearing prior to DCPS', the Ombudsman for Public Education said that bullying is among the top four issues that she deals with in her office. Often times, these issues only come to the Committee or the Ombudsman after a parent is unsatisfied with the response from the school. The Committee asked DCPS about how they are addressing school climate and school culture issues in light of these concerns. DCPS stated that every school has a bullying contact and that they are addressing some

⁷ Office of the State Superintendent of Education. "Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) 2014-15 School Year Results (Grades 3-8 and High School)" <http://osse.dc.gov/node/1120842>

of these behaviors through Response to Intervention (“RTI”). She also said they have curriculum around tenacity and resilience in schools. DCPS’ Office of Youth Engagement also launched a pilot this school year to help a group of school leaders create uniform and comprehensive school climate plans to improve behavior and satisfaction. There are 20 schools participating in this effort. The Committee is pleased that DCPS is tackling this issue. The Committee believes that with a focus on school climate, schools can minimize some of the bullying issues that are arising, particularly in the middle grades.

The conversation around school climate ties into a conversation about safe passage. At the Deputy Mayor for Education’s performance oversight hearing, several parents and LEA leaders testified about the need for a citywide conversation and effort to get to school and home safely. Chancellor Henderson remarked that this was an issue for DCPS as well, but noted that the issue of safe passage is not a school problem, but a citywide problem. DCPS has representation on the interagency Transportation Working Group for which this is a topic and agreed at the hearing to participate in an initiative called Man the Block, which was launched by a group of public charters schools to promote citywide awareness about the issue of safe passage. DCPS staff also works internally to address some safe passage issues between schools. For example, the start and end times for Dunbar High School and McKinley High School (neighboring schools with neighborhood beefs) have been staggered to alleviate the students all converging at the metro or bus stops at the same time. The Committee is supportive of safe passage initiatives and looks forward to participating in the Man the Block on May 16, 2016.

DCIAA and Student Activity Fund

Earlier this year, the Committee and the public was made aware of some issues and irregularities with regard to the Student Activity Fund (“Fund”) for DCPS Interscholastic Athletics Department (“DCIAA”). An internal audit and investigation found numerous instances of non-compliance with Student Activity Fund accounting policies, weakness in the system of internal control, and multiple instances where the Athletic Director exhibited gross negligence in her management of the Fund. The Committee raised this issue during the performance oversight hearing for DCPS. Chairperson Grosso asked Chancellor Henderson when she first became aware of the possible issues with the DCIAA Fund. She stated that she learned about the issues in the summer 2015. Prior to that time, even though DCIAA used to be housed inside school buildings that were often times vandalized and subjected to break-ins, Central Office never suspected any wrongdoings because they did not have any record of money being missing. Between November 2011 and June 2015, audits were conducted of the Fund. When questioned of how then it was possible that Central Office never caught the unallowable expenditures or that deposits lagged 2 to 164 days, the Chancellor responded that was due to lack of capacity, but that the regular checks are happening now. DCPS has shifted personnel priorities and have built out more capacity in its internal audit office. There were several recommendations by DCPS’ Office of Audit and Risk Management from the October audit report on the DCIAA Fund. One recommendation was that a safe be purchased for the DCIAA program and that a full-time Business Manager be hired. The Committee inquired whether or not both of things have happened and DCPS said that they had. Additional reforms have taken place including DCPS working with the Office of the Chief Financial Officer to have their staff serve as cashiers for events. DCPS is also conducting a national search for a new Athletic Director.

In light of the news about the DCIAA Fund, Chairperson Grosso asked DCPS about the other Student Activity Funds (“SAF”), which finance recognized extracurricular activities of the student body for which there is no allocation of funding from the annual appropriated budget. They are to be used to support or supplement the appropriated budget for normal school operations. Every DCPS school except Duke Ellington, Capitol Hill Montessori at Logan, and Fillmore have SAFs. Chancellor Henderson said that

until about two years ago, schools alone largely managed the SAFs and that Central Office did not even know how much were in them. She said that this has changed greatly. The Committee is interested to learn more information about the SAFs, including how often audits are conducted and who provides training of principals and the policies and procedures of the SAFs. These funds provide additional monies for students and the Committee wants to be sure that they are being handled appropriately.

Family and Community Engagement

The Committee has continuously been impressed with the growth, development, and progress of the Office of Family and Public Engagement for the past three years. The launch of the Community Action Team, the engagement of families and schools about food and nutrition, and also the increased commitment to facilitating home visits and connections between teachers and families has been great. At the hearing, Chairperson Grosso asked about the Family Engagement Partnership's collaborative efforts with the Flamboyant Foundation, and learned that the vast majority of the participating schools are elementary grades. The Committee and the public often hear less about DCPS' strategy for family engagement on the middle and high school level. DCPS stated that they have used elementary schools as the learning ground for their family engagement work and have moved up. Last year, there were two middle schools in the partnership and this school year they have four middle schools participating. There have certainly been adjustments to the formula. For example, the middle grades are doing student-led parent conferences where students explain their work and progress over the grading period. In terms of high schools, DCPS is approaching family engagement through the lens of college and career planning. Councilmember Alexander asked whether the funding for the partnership with Flamboyant would go away. The Chief of Family and Public Engagement stated very clearly that there is no sunset on their partnership with Flamboyant.

While DCPS has certainly improved in terms of family and community engagement, there are still breakdowns in communication when very important decisions are made. Chairperson Grosso raised the issue of DCPS choosing to tap the principal of Burroughs Elementary School mid-year to become the new principal of Roosevelt High School. The Committee was neither surprised in the selection nor surprised that DCPS wanted to provide her with more time to plan for a re-launch of the high school given some troubles they have experienced opening new schools this year, but the communication was horrible. DCPS sent a letter home in student's folders and did a robocall right before winter break. When the students returned from Winter Break the move had already happened. Chancellor Henderson was very candid and stated that the timing of the announcement was less than ideal and that they messed up. DCPS said they would provide additional support to Burroughs throughout the budget process this year and that they would be the first or second school to go through the community interview process for the new principal this spring. The Committee hopes that DCPS will continue to sharpen and improve its communication with its school communities and families. Situations like this only create more distrust.

Facilities and Modernizations

The Committee followed up with DCPS on a number of capital projects and policy recommendations that were outlined in the FY16 budget. For instance, the Committee recommended that DCPS conduct a feasibility study on the redevelopment and reopening of Shaw Middle School site in Ward 6 and the opening of a new middle school in Ward 7. DCPS stated they have plans to conduct this study this spring and, in additional data analysis, will solicit family and community input about the demand. They have been working with the Office of Planning on this study and have been exploring public-private partnerships in this regard.

D. D.C. PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD

As an independent authorizer of public charter schools, the Public Charter School Board (“PCSB”) is responsible for chartering new schools through a comprehensive application review process; monitoring the existing charter schools for compliance with applicable local and federal laws; and, ensuring public charter schools are held accountable for both academic and non-academic performance. The mission of the District of Columbia Public Charter Schools (“DCPCS”) is to provide an alternative free education for students who reside in the District of Columbia. Each charter school is a publicly funded, fully autonomous school and serves as its own local education agency.

On March 3, 2016, the Committee on Education held a performance oversight hearing for the Public Charter School Board. Fifteen public witnesses testified and one member for the Board, the Executive Director, and the Deputy Director of the PCSB.

FISCAL YEAR 2015 OPERATING BUDGET

Fund Title	Approved Budget	Revised Budget	Expenditures
Local (100)	-	-	-
Federal Grant (200)	-	-	-
Federal Payments	-	-	-
Dedicated Taxes (110)	-	-	-
Intra-District (700)	-	-	-
Private Donations (450)	-	-	-
Private Grants (400)	-	-	-
Special Purpose (600)	6,611,000.00	6,494,512.00	116,488.00
Grand Total	6,611,000.00	6,494,512.00	116,488.00

The public testimony included statements on the importance of supporting charter school independence and autonomy, the need for additional support for special education, support for individual local education agencies, and for attention to the adult public charter school performance management framework (“PMF”) for future year assessments. During the fiscal year 2015 performance oversight process, the Committee on Education focused on the management of key programs and services within the agency. Below is a summary of what was discussed during their performance oversight hearing:

Accountability and Monitoring

In June 2015, the National Academy of Sciences released its report titled *An Evaluation of Public Schools of the District of Columbia: Reform in a Changing Landscape*, a five-year evaluation of public education in the District since the passage of the Public Education Reform Amendment Act of 2007 (“PERAA”). A few months later, the first year results from Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (“PARCC”) tests were publicly released. The PERAA report and the test scores coupled together, shed light on the state of public education in the city and gave policy leaders tangible indicators of where there are weaknesses in the District of Columbia’s public education system. In pre-hearing questions, the Committee asked PCSB specifically about the PERAA report’s findings and recommendations and how they are working to address some of the issues raised about equitable access to learning opportunities, student achievement, the availability of data, and the overall effects on our students most at-risk. In

responses to the Committee, the PCSB specifically called out the report’s criticism about “the lack of centralized system wide monitoring” for all public schools. During the hearing this was further expounded upon. The PCSB disagreed with the report and stated that centralized system of monitoring was not necessary because it would stifle charter school innovation. Further, PCSB stated they already do a great deal of monitoring and data collection, which offer “information-rich annual reports” for other education stakeholders and the government. As examples, PCSB pointed to the aggregated data that can be found through LearnDC and the Equity Reports.

While the Committee has no intention to stifle the innovation of public schools, charters or DCPS, the Committee does believe there is some truth in the PERAA reports’ findings. Specifically, the evaluators wrote, “...the governance structure with respect to learning opportunities is diffuse: no one entity has both the responsibility and the authority for monitoring the provision of education and supports for students, particularly those at risk for school failure, across both the DCPS and charter schools.”⁸ The report goes on to say “that a single entity should be responsible for this essential function system wide: to meet this responsibility the entity in charge will need to maintain and make publicly accessible data about students with particular needs, including those with disabilities, English-language learners, and students in poverty; school climate, including discipline, attendance, safety and facilities; and academic supports for learning.”⁹ With more discussion, Chairperson Grosso and the PCSB agreed that there needs to be a citywide approach to educating children and public school planning because students often moved fluidly between DCPS and public charter schools. PCSB noted that they worked with the Deputy Mayor for Education on the education-related District Priority Goals for 2016 and have monthly meetings with sector leadership to discuss education and planning.

Local Education Agency (“LEA”) Payment Initiative

In 2013, the Council passed legislation proposed by the PCSB and the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (“OCFO”) to place heavier weight on the first quarterly payments to ensure more accurate and timely payments to charter schools. During the performance oversight hearing, the Committee asked for an update on this effort to better streamline payments. To date, this initiative is still a work in progress. PCSB has vastly improved its methodology for forecasting enrollments, which ensures that schools do not have to “scramble” for money later in the year. PCSB has been meeting with the Deputy Mayor for Education and the OCFO on the new LEA payment initiative in anticipation that it will be finalized in August 2016 and ready to be implemented for the school year 2016-2017. The Committee will continue to monitor the rollout of the LEA payment initiative and looks forward to discussing with LEAs during the FY16 performance oversight hearings next year how well they feel it is working.

Mental and Behavioral Health

The Committee is dedicated to having more behavioral and mental health services in schools to help children meet needs that allow them to be more engaged and ready to learn in the classroom. To underscore its importance, in a letter to the Mayor on December 18, 2015, Chairperson Grosso requested that behavioral health specialists be placed in every public school. Through pre-hearing responses to the Committees questions, it was noted that the D.C. Department of Behavioral Health (“DBH”) has 20 professionals working in public charter schools. The Chairperson asked the PCSB about their knowledge of the proposed System of Care Expansion Implementation Executive Team, chaired by Health and

⁸ National Research Council of the National Academies, *An Evaluation of Public Schools of the District of Columbia: Reform in a Changing Landscape*, p. 2-8.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Human Services Deputy Mayor Brenda McDonald and the Department of Health's Healthy Schools Assessments, which will have an emphasis on mental health as well as physical health. PCSB stated that there was a need for further understanding what the DBH behavioral health professionals are able to do and what population of students they can serve. Many schools have hired additional counselors to work with students with Individualized Education Plan ("IEP"s). The Committee is concerned about the gap in service for students who do not have IEPs and would like for the PCSB to help assess this further. If there is an understanding of what the gap is in public charter schools then the Council can act to fund the additional professionals needed. For specialized populations, the PCSB conducted Qualitative Site Reviews with targeted focus on students with disabilities and English language learners. These visits have helped both the LEAs and the PCSB understand how they can intervene and help school children within a decentralized system.

Lottery and Placement Trends

Earlier this year, the Committee on Education moved legislation to provide a limited military preference for the common lottery for public education. At the time, Chairperson Grosso expressed a desire to convene a more formalized conversation about how to handle new requests for preferences so that the Committee is not approaching it in a piecemeal fashion. For instance, LEA leaders and advocates have tossed around ideas for a neighborhood preference and during the Student Assignment and Boundary Review process the Task Force recommended an at-risk preference. In order to responsibly start this conversation, the Committee needs data about the lottery, the preferences that families already take advantage of, and any indications about trends. During the hearing PCSB noted that the Common Lottery Board is collecting data and surveying it. Due to the increased popularity of the common lottery for public education and the rich data it can provide, the PCSB has added two new staff members, one planner and one community engagement specialist to help with advising the Board and applicants about what is needed and desired in the city. The Committee noted that it often hears testimony from parents advocating for language or dual immersion schools or for certain programming that they believe should be more widely available and accessible, but in order for any action to be taken on these specific programs there needs to be transparent data. The Committee looks forward to this conversation about lottery preferences and engaging the PCSB.

Adult Charter Performance Management Framework

The Committee held a joint hearing with the Committee of the Whole in September 2015 on the state of adult education and literacy in the District. This was the first year that the PCSB released Performance Management Framework ("PMF"), an accountability tool used by the PCSB to evaluate the success of charter schools and adult charter schools. The Committee asked about PCSB's methodology for the rankings this year and the changes being made to strengthen the measurement tool. Unlike the PMF for charters with grades Pre-K-12, this would utilize different variables and inputs. The PCSB stated that they analyzed the schools based on their measurable data and that all of the adult charters are weighted by variety of what they offer to residents. Although all eight of the adult public charter schools have different accountability frameworks, all of their outcomes in their missions are measurable. For example, all of the adult public charter schools have passage of the GED or the ESL certificate as part of their mission. The outcomes of the students taking the GED or the ESL certificate are therefore measurable for the PCSB to determine success rates. It was also noted that the PCSB will be altering the timeline of when a student is considered to be enrolled from twelve hours (typical PK through 12th grade enrollment) to two consecutive weeks. This change was made because the structure of the schools and the fluidity of the students is markedly different than PK-12 public charter schools. The PCSB's scoring will be the same for school

years 2014-2015 and 2015-2016. The new PMF for adult charter schools will be measured and applied for school year 2016-2017.

Cross Sector Task Force and Disposition of Buildings

The Committee asked the PCSB about the disposition of buildings and its relationship to the Cross Sector Task Force currently convened by the Deputy Mayor of Education. The Deputy Mayor has publicly committed to making the building disposition process more fair, transparent, and consistent. The Committee and the PCSB agreed that it is important to continue collaborating with the DME on the Cross Agency Collaboration Taskforce and participating in these conversations. Chairperson Grosso raised the fact that the issue of facilities are not intended to be part of the recommendations that are to be made to Mayor from the Task Force. The PCSB responded that they believe that it is important part of the future of schools in the city. The Committee would certainly agree.

E. STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

The mission of the District of Columbia State Board of Education (“State Board”) is to provide policy leadership, support, advocacy, and oversight of public education to ensure that every student is valued and gains the skills and knowledge necessary to become informed, competent and contributing global citizens.

The State Board views its role in the achievement of this mission as one with shared responsibility, whereby it engages families, students, educators, community members, elected officials and business leaders to play a vital role in preparing every child for college and/or career success. The Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education and the Office of the Chief Student Advocate is also housed within the State Board.

On March 2, 2016 the Committee on Education held the FY15 performance oversight hearing in room 120 of the John A. Wilson Building. State Board of Education President, Jack Jacobson, Ombudsman for Public Education Joyanna Smith, and Chief Student Advocate, Faith Gibson-Hubbard offered testimony on behalf of the State Board.

FISCAL YEAR 2015 OPERATING BUDGET

Fund Title	Approved Budget	Revised Budget	Expenditures
Local (100)	1,151,555.00	1,141,206.00	989,804.22
Federal Grant (200)	-	-	-
Federal Payments	-	-	-
Dedicated Taxes (110)	-	-	-
Intra-District (700)	-	-	-
Private Donations (450)	-	-	-
Private Grants (400)	-	-	-
Special Purpose (600)	-	-	-
Grand Total	1,151,555.00	1,141,206.00	989,804.22

During the FY15 performance oversight process, the Committee on Education reviewed the work of the State Board, the Ombudsman, and the Chief Student Advocate and praised its progress in achieving some policy related and engagement goals. The Committee also raised concerns about each one’s ability to meet statutory requirements. Below are highlights from the hearing:

Policy Engagement

The Committee noted and praised the work of the State Board in FY15 and to-date in FY16 as some of the most substantial and significant policy work the State Board has ever undertaken. Here are several of the key policy accomplishments:

- Issued a report on “Challenges Associated with Implementation of the District of Columbia’s New Compulsory Attendance Laws and Recommendations for Addressing Them”;
- Approved a State Diploma for individuals who pass the General Education Exam (“GED”) or complete the National External Diploma Program (“NEDP”);

- Created a high school credit flexibility task force to award credit in a variety of ways; and
- Oversaw a review of and issued recommendations for updates to the District’s Health Education Standards and worked with OSSE to draft the new standards.

The State Board explained that it has experienced staff and Board changes, which has brought some energetic individuals on board who are passionate about the pace of reform. The Committee is impressed by this work and encourages the State Board to continue this progress.

Student Engagement

The State Board created a systematic avenue for student input on State Board matters through a Student Advisory Committee (“SAC”), designed to include 17 students from across the District of Columbia. The SAC is co-chaired by the two student representatives to the State Board of Education. The SAC held a number of meetings since September 2015, including a joint meeting with the Public Charter School Board’s Student Advisory Committee to discuss revisions to the District’s health education standards. The Committee believes this student engagement could greatly help members of the State Board better craft education policy going forward.

Language Access

In 2004, the Council passed the “Language Access Act of 2004” to eliminate language-based discrimination and thereby enable D.C. residents, workers, and visitors to receive equivalent information and services from the D.C. government, regardless of what language they speak. The law covers all District agencies that come into contact with the public, including the State Board. In 2015, Chairperson Grosso introduced the “Language Access for Education Amendment Act of 2015” which seeks to strengthen existing law by increasing the standards of language access for all education agencies. The Committee is concerned that not all local education agencies and education-related agencies are doing their part to ensure that all residents have equal access to D.C. government. Since the State Board also houses the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education and the Office of the Chief Student Advocate, the Committee is especially concerned about their compliance with the law. During the performance oversight hearing, the State Board acknowledged its non-compliance with the “Language Access Act of 2004” and stated it does not have the resources needed to be fully compliant. When questioned about this further, the State Board pointed to an insufficient budget for printing materials and other non-personal spending that would allow them to have materials in multiple languages. However, the State Board has been trying – this year, they cut some fellowship positions to pay for language access telephone translation services. While the Committee is appreciative of the effort, that is not enough. The work of the State Board, and especially the Ombudsman, should be fully available and accessible to all D.C. residents. The Committee encourages the State Board to examine its budget and work with the Budget Office to secure more resources to be compliant with the law. In the meantime, the Committee suggests that the State Board partner with other agencies and organizations to ensure that no person is turned away from services due to language barriers.

State Accountability Plans

The State Board is responsible for approving the District’s statewide accountability plan, in coordination with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (“OSSE”). The accountability plan, required by federal law, maintains transparency and provides important information for parents, policymakers, and stakeholders on the progress of our public education system. Over the past year, there has been a lot of

movement at the federal level that required action from the State Board. Throughout FY15, the State Board engaged in significant public engagement with OSSE on a flexibility waiver application for the “Elementary and Secondary Education Act” (“ESEA”), which would allow local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools the opportunity to design need-based interventions to improve student learning as opposed to strictly following the requirements of the “No Child Left Behind Act of 2001” (“NCLB”) This culminated in a report and recommendations to OSSE centered on the need for more readily available data on student achievement, learning conditions, use of resources, and the need to increase the weight of student progress in school classifications. Ultimately, the State Board issued final approval for the ESEA waiver application in June 2015. This waiver expires in August 2016.

In December 2015, the United States Congress passed the “Every Student Succeeds Act” (“ESSA”), which is an update to ESEA. The Committee is concerned about what this means for the District’s accountability system, especially since there will be a gap between when the ESEA waiver expires and when a new accountability plan needs to be in place for compliance with the new federal law. During the hearing, State Board President Jack Jacobson stated that the State Board has been working with the National Association of State Boards of Education to examine the scope of work needed to comply with the law. He remarked that ESSA is the largest devolution of power to state and local governments on education policy in the past two decades. Additionally, he said ESSA puts less emphasis on using standardized testing as a measure of student achievement by requiring at least one non-testing measure of success for schools, which assuredly will be hotly debated. The new accountability plan in compliance with ESSA will need to be in place by SY17-18, which will require action from the State Board by January 2017. President Jacobson stated that the State Board has started conversations with both the Deputy Mayor for Education and OSSE on draft timelines for ESSA action. The Committee has requested that the State Board share that draft timeline and will be monitoring progress to ensure D.C. is meeting the milestones necessary to meet the deadline. The Committee also acknowledges that the passage of ESSA may require updating language in the D.C. Code. One obvious change is with regard to the removal of references to NCLB.

Budget

Budgets have been a recurring issue for the State Board. The constraints and its impact on their work were presented in the testimony from the President Jacobson, the Ombudsman, and the Chief Student Advocate. One example is compliance with the Language Access Act which was mentioned earlier. All testified that they would like to be more engaged with the school communities and neighborhoods, increase communication, and produce more policy-related reports, but these things are unable to be achieved without significant investment. The State Board testified that its budget has been repeatedly cut for a number of years and that in order to keep pace with the education reform efforts in the District, it needs adequate resources. Although this was a performance oversight hearing, the State Board argued that with its current budget, it cannot move deliberately, thoughtfully and come to well-reasoned policy positions that are based on evidence. The Committee will certainly monitor this as the Council heads into the budget process for FY17.

The Ombudsman and Chief Student Advocate

The Office of the Ombudsman has received 903 cases since its establishment in 2015. During the current SY15-16 (to-date) it had received 285 cases, which represents more than a 10% increase compared to SY14-15. There was also a staff shortage during the winter months, whereby fellows were unavailable to assist with the work of the office, and the office had to turn away some families. To-date in SY15-16, 25% of the cases came from Ward 8; 19% from Ward 7; and 10% from Ward 5 for a total of 54% of cases

stemming from those wards. This has been a consistent trend. Further, 64% of the cases come from DCPS schools. The most common complaints are in the areas of special education (13%), school discipline (10%), enrollment (12%) and bullying (7%).

The Office of the Student Advocate has been engaged in work with individual families, and has guided, supported, and empowered over 100 students and families to help them achieve equal access to public education through advocacy, outreach, and information services. The office has also developed a variety of targeted trainings, information sessions, and workshops to help empower families. The Student Advocate has also developed the Education and Community Resource Guide, which is a continuously evolving resource that currently has over 350 resource listings organized in 30 categories. Its intent is to “provide students, parents, families and communities with a roadmap to getting started in navigating the public education landscape in D.C.

During the hearing, the Committee asked the Ombudsman and Chief Student Advocate about how they viewed the differences of their offices. When listening to the testimony they presented, it did not sound as though their work was different, although that was not the intent of the Council when creating the two offices. The Committee on Education report for Bill 20-314, the “Parent and Student Empowerment Amendment Act of 2013” which clarified the role of the Ombudsman and established the Office of the Student Advocate was very clear that these entities be separate and have distinct functions to ensure that the needs of students and parents are not being compromised. The report states: “one office serves as the voice of the student while the other serves as the neutral arbiter.”¹⁰ The Committee report even includes a table delineating the distinct responsibilities of each office. The Ombudsman explained that her office is supposed to be neutral on issues, but the two offices work together to best serve students and parents. The Chief Student Advocate also reiterated the teamwork between the two. She noted that had both offices been rolled out at the same time, the roles may be clearer. The Ombudsman’s office was the first to open and arguably absorbed some functionality of the Office of the Chief Student Advocate while that position was vacant. The Committee will continue to examine the functions of the two offices and monitor its work to ensure it is fulfilling the Council’s intent.

The Ombudsman and Chief Student Advocate both advocated for updates to their statutes. The Ombudsman discussed challenges meeting the statutory obligation of releasing an annual report within 90 days of the end of the previous school year. This has been problematic due to the timing coinciding with the start of a new school year, where there is often an influx of cases requiring the attention of the office. With limited capacity staffing wise, compliance with this portion of the law has been a challenge. The Chief Student Advocate also expressed an interest in statutory changes during the hearing. For example, she stated that the current statute requires the opening of four public education resource centers throughout the District, which is unrealistic given the current budget of the State Board. While the Committee acknowledges the budget limitations of the State Board at this time, further examination of the D.C. Code shows that language states the Chief Student Advocate “may” open four public education resource centers, but does not require it. The Committee, however, is open to a further discussion about statute changes that will better align the work of the three offices and help improve their efficiency and effectiveness.

¹⁰ Committee on Education Committee Report for Bill 20-314. <http://lims.dccouncil.us/Download/29470/B20-0314-CommitteeReport.pdf>

F. D.C. PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

The District of Columbia Public Library (“DCPL”) supports children and adults with books and other library materials that foster success in school, reading and personal growth. DC Public Library includes a central library and 25 neighborhood libraries that provide services to children, youth, teens, and adults. “Space is the service” is new and enhanced library facilities that provides inspiring destinations for learning, exploration, and community. “Libraries are not their buildings” is how DCPL strives to reach users in increasingly surprising and convenient ways outside of the library buildings. Libraries are also engines of human capital development and libraries must plan for the rapidly evolving informational and educational needs of the residents of the District of Columbia.

The FY15 performance oversight hearing for DCPL was held on Tuesday, February 23, 2016 in room 120 of the John A. Wilson Building. The President of the Board of Library Trustees, Gregory McCarthy, and the Executive Director of the Library, Richard Reyes-Gavilan provided testimony on behalf of the agency.

FISCAL YEAR 2015 OPERATING BUDGET

Fund Title	Approved Budget	Revised Budget	Expenditures
Local (100)	56,284,835.85	56,792,113.63	56,205,561.81
Federal Grant (200)	903,472.00	934,331.84	934,331.84
Federal Payments	-	-	-
Dedicated Taxes (110)	-	29,894.94	29,894.94
Intra-District (700)	-	-	-
Private Donations (450)	-	-	-
Private Grants (400)			
Special Purpose (600)	540,000.03	317,399.08	281,593.99
Grand Total	57,728,307.88	58,073,739.49	57,451,382.58

DCPL is one of the District government agencies that has the widest reach in terms of residents, but also consistently performs well in service to the city. Here are some highlights from what was discussed during their performance oversight hearing:

Continuous Demand for Access

Several members of the public testified about their experience with DCPL in FY15 and FY16 to date. On top of the list was desire that the libraries have even more expanded access and hours. It was just in October 2013 that DCPL rolled out a new policy whereby all library locations would be open on Sundays and they offered expanded hours during the week. However, the public was clear that this is no longer meeting demand. Currently, most libraries are closed on Thursday and Sunday mornings throughout the city. As a result, often times you will see a line of individuals at the doors of the facilities waiting until they open. Many witnesses argued that not having libraries operational during those morning hours also decreases programmatic activities. Individuals were clear however, that any expansion in hours also be accompanied by an increase in FTEs to ensure the library has capacity. The Committee is supportive of expanded access to the libraries and will look for ways to address demand during the FY17 budget process.

Ongoing Renovation Projects

Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library

Several individuals testified about the upcoming modernization of Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library (“MLK Library”) and expressed concern about public engagement and the proposed design for the facility. Some issues raised were concerns about the placement of the auditorium on the fourth floor, issues with the exterior design, the placement of the reading rooms, and overall ADA accessibility. The Committee raised these questions with Director Reyes-Gavilan and Mr. McCarthy during the hearing. DCPL responded that it has engaged in extensive community engagement on this project often through its MLK Advisory Panel. They further explained that programmatic design was deliberate, but that the physical appearance both outside and inside the facility is constrained by historic preservation regulations and the Historic Preservation Review Board. In terms of ADA accessibility, DCPL stated that while the current building is not fully ADA compliant, the new one will be which is consistent with the full modernization of its other library facilities. For example, the new library will have elevators that are significantly larger than the current elevators. DCPL has engaged in dialogue with the disabled community, including a focus group with users of its Center for Accessibility to garner feedback to incorporate into the design of the modernized building. The Committee noted that ADA compliance should not be the only criterion to meet, and encouraged DCPL to go above and beyond those requirements and explore universal design. DCPL stated that its intention is for the modernized MLK Library is to draw the public into and through the building.

The Committee has no desire to micro-manage the design and build phase of the MLK Library renovation. In fact, DCPL has a good track record and reputation for engaging with the community, designing, building, and reopening libraries often on-time and on-budget. The Committee encourages DCPL to continue its public engagement on the design and full modernization of MLK Library to ensure it continues to deliver functional modernized facilities on-time, on-budget, and reflective of the needs of the citizens of District of Columbia. The Committee did ask for an update on the interim spaces for the central library and its programs during the time of construction. DCPL noted that its interim spaces for MLK Library should be finalized with leases coming before the Council for approval as soon as March 2016. DCPL is committed to finding interim space for the Fabrication Labs, the Center for Accessibility, the Adult Literacy Center, other unique services, and administrative spaces.

Branch Renovations and Projects

DCPL provided the Committee with an update on several branch library renovation projects that are currently under way or had been recently finished, including the re-opening of Chevy Chase Library earlier in February after minor improvements. Shepherd Park library also received minor improvements and should open in the coming weeks, and Woodridge Library will open later this year. Cleveland Park library will have interim space on the University of the District of Columbia campus, blocks from the Van Ness metro stop as that branch will be undergoing a full modernization this year. Additionally, there will be a community meeting in May for Southwest Library to explore the best library services and community amenities for their upcoming modernization.

During the hearing, Mr. McCarthy expressed the need for the District to think strategically about the remaining branches that have not yet been modernized. Director Reyes-Gavilan mentioned the public private partnership feasibility study that examined five branches that were unfunded as of FY15. The study found interesting opportunities to modernize several libraries at reduced cost while providing

neighborhoods with various onsite amenities such as housing and retail. This type of model could best suit branches that are unfunded, or under-funded such as Chevy Chase and Shepherd Park, among a few others. However, DCPL also cautioned that whatever savings can be achieved should be materialized in a tangible way for the community. DCPL also cautioned that it does not have the bandwidth to pursue this at the moment, aside from beginning conversations to gain support for the concept. The Committee is certainly intrigued by this possibility and is interested in learning more information as it becomes available.

Maintenance

In pre-hearing responses, the Committee asked DCPL about its maintenance budget which has been a source of cuts in prior years. DCPL stated that its maintenance budget in FY14 and FY15 were sufficient, but in FY16 it is insufficient. Consequently, DCPL has to defer some maintenance repairs in FY16. Instead of being able to fix items that require attention, DCPL will have to prioritize major repairs and transfer money from a previous year's capital budget. The Committee believes this is no way for a major agency with substantial capital investments to maintain its facilities, most of which are brand new. DCPL should advocate for additional capital funding for this effort in the FY17 budget process.

In addition to physical plant upgrades, DCPL is also managing increased demand to its internet networks. Many individuals utilize libraries for internet access, both wired and wireless and DCPL is witnessing exponential growth of network use. Just like roofs, HVAC systems, and boilers, computer and network equipment also gets old. The library cited the need of a general upgrade to switches and network equipment to ensure it is able to provide reliable fast internet access while managing increased demand. Funding for this maintenance can come through federal e-rate program funds, or capital funds.

Books from Birth

Through the FY16 Budget Support Act, the Committee on Education passed the "Books from Birth Establishment Amendment Act of 2015." This legislation established a program at DCPL known as "Books from Birth" whereby every registered child from birth to age five receives a free book in the mail through DCPL every month. The intent of the legislation was to close the "word gap" between children in affluent and impoverished communities, and encouraging reading between parents and children. DCPL has partnered with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to harness purchasing power and logistical expertise to execute the program. During the hearing, the Committee asked DCPL for an update on implementing the program. DCPL reported that in the first few months of registering children, the program has proven to be very popular with over 5,000 children already registered. A majority of these children live in Wards 5, 7, and 8. This high level of participation has exceeded the projected registration, which may require additional funding to keep up with the pace of demand. The Committee is thrilled about the uptake of the program thus far, but certainly wants to make sure that DCPL has the resources necessary to continue being successful. The Deputy Mayor for Education has also pledged intellectual bandwidth to help measure the success of the program. DCPL testified that they would like to be able to do more in-house analysis of success and data to help determine which programs are most effective.

Youth Programs

In response to pre-hearing questions, DCPL noted that there was a decline in teen program attendance. At the hearing, DCPL explained that it was not a universal decline, but that teen program attendance often varies depending on the staff member at various locations. DCPL is examining offerings at branches to design programs that are specific to teens, while also being fun and engaging. DCPL noted that reaching

this age-group is a challenge shared by library branches all across the country. The Committee encourages DCPL to examine teen programming closely and come to the FY17 budget hearing prepared to discuss targeted enhancements for teen programming.

Shared Technical Services

In FY15, DCPL piloted a shared technical services program with DC Prep Public Charter School at Benning, and also began a feasibility study on how to partner with the D.C. Public Schools to provide library services and staff support. DCPL views this as a good government initiative and hopes to pilot some aspects of this service to students in SY2016-2017. The Library hopes to invest a bit more “intellectual fire power” into creating a business model that includes secure, stable, long-term funding and incorporates interested charter schools. Questions that remain include the following: how funding will be transferred between agencies, whether or not to do a phased-implementation, if there should be a threshold for participation determined by the number of students served, among others. The State Board of Library Trustees is assisting with the conceptualization, roll-out, and implementation of this program.

Collections

DCPL testified that the shifts to digital circulation is happening in libraries across the country. This is something that should be monitored closely, as the implications for staffing are seismic. The Library needs to maintain collections in both print and digital. Digital circulation has increased 180% since FY13, while physical circulation has increased 2.5%. Proper investments should be made to ensure DCPL is able to preserve a collection reflective of the needs of 21st century citizens. One impressive intersection of technology and DCPL digital content is the recent geoauthentication feature DCPL has secured from various database vendors. The feature allows anybody in the District of Columbia to access certain DCPL databases without requiring a log-in or physically being in library. There are some exclusions such as college campuses, but generally this is a thoughtful and innovative way the library provides quality service in nearly every home in the District with access to internet.

Board of Library Trustees

DCPL noted that five of its nine-member Board of Library Trustees are currently in hold-over status, with an additional vacancy. The Committee finds it troublesome that two-thirds of DCPL’s members are not in a position to make long-term decisions with the certainty and investment to ensure proper implementation. DCPL testified that it is working with the Deputy Mayor for Education and the Mayor’s Office of Talent and Acquisitions to identify and nominate (or re-nominate) members to the Board of Library Trustees. The Committee looks forward to holding hearings on those nominees once they are sent to the Council in the coming months.