



**Testimony of Founder and Facilitator Scott Goldstein
State Board of Education Public Meeting
August 18, 2021**

Good Evening members of the State Board of Education. Thank you for holding this meeting and doing so much work to engage a broad cross-section of DC to come tonight to share their thoughts as the school year begins. I think the panels tonight will provide further proof as to the need to empower this body so that community voices have more meaningful voice and collaboration in our education system. Before I move to my main topic, I am among the many concerned parents of unvaccinated children worried about unmasked children eating lunch indoors, inexcusably weak covid-guidance, testing and quarantining rules from DCPS and others that is clearly based more in politics than science and the lack of virtual options for families with legitimate fears among rising cases in DC. I urge the board to act on these concerns right now.

I'm here tonight primarily to discuss the SBOE's recent adoption of the teacher retention report written by Mary Levy for the State Board. The report showed DC still has among the highest teacher turnover rates in the country. Although we saw a drop this past year, we know that it was virtually impossible for teachers to visit, interview in-person and move schools during the heart of the pandemic last summer. Morale surveys have shown steep declines in teacher morale nationwide and our own surveys have shown staggering percentages of DC educators considering leaving DC or the profession entirely. We need to be implementing well-proven strategies to retain educators now.

Your report carried over many recommendations from last year from this board on retention, but I want to urge this board to move beyond these broad recommendations. This board, alongside EmpowerEd, WTU and other groups, has elevated the issue of teacher turnover in DC. There's recognition now that this crisis exists. But it's been three years since EmpowerEd and the SBOE held a co-sponsored event with a large and diverse group of stakeholders to come up with concrete solutions to the teacher retention crisis and we need leadership from this body in moving beyond talking about the problem to working with us and other partners to solve it.

I applaud the board's push for the data warehouse legislation at the DC Council, but there are so many more areas where we need to get specific.

One of the recommendations calls for analyzing the impact and value of DCPS's teacher evaluation system, IMPACT, which is especially timely considering the new release of the American University support which accurately calls the system racially biased and one that creates a culture of fear, rather than growth, in our schools. We've long know this is true- but we need leadership to recommend and elevate different types of evaluation / growth systems that work better and push DCPS to adopt them. For example, we've recommended called Peer Assistance and Review.

Another recommendation calls for developing mentorship programs for new teachers. I couldn't agree more with the need for mentorship- but there are good ways and bad ways to run teacher mentorship programs- in fact studies show the majority of them are ineffective. I hope the SBOE will get down to the work of researching and proposing to DCPS and public charter schools well-researched and effective models for mentorship.

Another recommendation calls for creating statewide professional development for principals on teacher retention. I agree with Rep. Gasoi's comments from last month's meeting that asking OSSE to create a centralized one sized fits all PD for principal on this is bad policy. Centralized PD is often resented and ineffective. EmpowerEd works with schools to do this exact work and we know what it takes to help principals and teachers work together to build relational trust and shared leadership. SBOE could host a panel to lift up best practices in this area, solicit feedback for proposing new policy and more.

In fact at the join forum we held together in November of 2018 we created a powerful list of recommendations for agencies and LEAs but have yet to go much deeper on creative ideas generated there like flexible scheduling, school-based professional development, reducing emphasis on high-stakes testing and more. You can see them all in the December 2018 SBOE memo I have attached to my testimony. You can see EmpowerEd's agenda to tackle the teacher retention crisis [here](#).

We need to get back to this work and we need the SBOE as a partner not only in raising awareness on teacher retention but in elevating and implementing effective solutions.

I'm excited that you'll hear from many EmpowerEd teacher fellows tonight (and in the months to come) with solutions oriented thinking on many issues and we look forward to continued partnership. Thank you.



MEMORANDUM

To: D.C. State Board of Education Members
From: SBOE Staff
Date: December 19, 2018
Subject: Teacher and Principal Retention Recommendations

Background

In May 2018, the D.C. State Board of Education (SBOE) contracted with local education researcher and data analyst Mary Levy to produce a report on teacher and principal retention in the District of Columbia. Following the production of the report in October 2018, SBOE held a series of engagement efforts around the reports findings and to identify solutions to retention issues in the District. These engagement efforts included:

- Hosting over 15 witnesses at the October 24 public meeting;
- Welcoming nearly 100 teachers, principals, community members, and policy makers to a public forum on teacher and principal retention at Walker Jones Education Campus on November 28; and
- Soliciting feedback via an online platform on the potential solutions suggested at the public forum, which was viewed by over 450 unique visitors who provided more than 200 votes on the potential solutions.

At this time, the SBOE is synthesizing the comments, feedback, and suggestions of the nearly 600 individuals who have actively engaged on the topic of teacher and principal retention in the District of Columbia into actionable policy recommendations.

Policy Recommendations

The work of SBOE and EmpowerEd, a teacher advocacy organization, over the past two months has produced a list of more than 30 possible solutions to address retention in the District. Items on this robust list of suggestions can be directed to the mayor, the Council, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), and charter local education agencies (LEAs).

Below are four major themes that were captured and received the most attention (i.e., votes via the online platform and during the public forum) through our engagement efforts, as well as the policy recommendations the State Board should consider pursuing:

1. ***Logistics and human resources*** - investment in programs and incentives to make the jobs of teachers, principals, and school leaders more attractive.
 - ***RECOMMENDATION:*** Draft a letter related to successful professional development models and incentive-based initiatives (e.g., tax incentives, student loan repayment, housing stipends, family-centered benefits/programs, shorter retirement incentive plan, sabbaticals). Reference research studies, exemplar districts, cities, and states, and provide model legislation, as well as specific regulatory language to be considered.
 - ***DIRECTED TO:*** Executive Office of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor of Education, Council of the District of Columbia
2. ***Empowerment and distributed leadership*** - recognition of the accomplishments of teacher and school-based staff, their desires for progression, growth, and advancement opportunities, and the educational expertise that makes them capable of being effective decision-makers.
 - ***RECOMMENDATION:*** Outline a series of research-backed and effective strategies and professional development opportunities that schools and LEAs may implement to ensure that teachers and school-based staff are
 - prepared for addressing all types of issues—especially those that extend beyond the classroom (e.g., hunger, trauma, violence);
 - supported through different staffing models if they choose take on additional responsibilities;
 - empowered and trusted to make school-level decisions in an efficient and autonomous manner, with the scheduling flexibility desired.
 - ***DIRECTED TO:*** DCPS and charter LEAs
3. ***Data and research*** - capturing annual data on teachers, principals, and school leaders (e.g., preparation, demographic, experience, reasons for entry and exit of the classroom/school, etc.) so that all public schools have consistent and comparable information to better understand their staff.

- **RECOMMENDATION:** Draft a proposal to establish a statewide database on teacher movement, explicitly stating the data points and items that should be included in the system and the reasons as to why they must be captured. Call on the District to ensure the collection of annual data is thoughtful, not overly burdensome for entities involved, and ethical. Ensure that said data is publicly accessible.

- **DIRECTED TO:** OSSE, Office of the D.C. Auditor

4. **High-stakes testing** - reducing the emphasis on high-stakes testing in evaluating student and teacher success.

- **RECOMMENDATION:** Understanding that the District's statewide test (PARCC) and teacher evaluation system (IMPACT) will not be drastically overhauled or eliminated overnight, encourage state education agencies to use PARCC differently. Call on DCPS to examine how IMPACT actually benefits students, allows for teachers to improve, and ensure highly effective teachers stay in the classroom. Continue to push for the implementation of the High School Graduation Requirements Task Force recommendation on competency-based waivers that would allow students to show mastery of core content through experiences and knowledge gained outside of traditional channels.

- **DIRECTED TO:** OSSE