The Mayor's Plan for Achieving Success in the DCPS:
Is the Implementation Likely to Match the Vision?
by the
Council of the Great City Schools
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The Mayor Adrian Fenty's achievement plan for the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) is divided into four major parts. The first section outlines the philosophical foundation undergirding the plan. The second section outlines the plan's goals and strategies. In preparing this commentary, the Council of the Great City Schools assessed how the criteria in the first section of the mayor's plan figure into the evaluation of the goals and strategies that are proposed in the second. These strategies include a proposed timeline for outcomes and measures. Because many of the plan's activities are to take place within the first 100 days of mayoral assumption of authority for the school system, the Council reviewed the feasibility of this timeline in light of the plan's stance. The third section of the mayor's plan outlines the high-level measures of success for which the administration would be held accountable. The final section consists of an appendix that provides an overview of the proposed DCPS SchoolStat accountability system.

This commentary will examine the provisions in the plan to see whether the plan's implementation would lead to achieving the vision it sets forth and whether the plan shows internal consistency.

Section One

The Vision

The Fenty administration envisions a school system that will prepare students to compete locally, nationally, and internationally, through a strong focus on student success above all else, through strategic prioritization of resources, and through relentless attention to implementation.

- Given this vision, one would expect to see a plan that is aligned to prepare students for meeting the measures of success and that provides a rationale for the use of resources and a means to build systematic use of those resources. One also would expect to see an approach to implementation that unifies all of the actions into a cohesive whole that leads clearly to realizing the plan's vision. However, the mayor's plan attempts to move resources in so many directions simultaneously that priorities are likely to be unclear to staff, resources dissipated, and implementation unfocused.

Measures of Success

The Fenty administration sets out local, national, and international measures of success. At the local level, the school system would continue to use the District of Columbia

Comprehensive Assessment System (DC-CAS). At the national level, the school system would use the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), often called "the nation's report card." At the international level, the school system would rely on two tests—Trends in International Math and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). The stated goal of using these assessments is to increase the rigor of study for all student groups.

- Given these measures, one would expect to see an analysis of what these tests assess to ensure that the curriculum prepares students with the concepts, knowledge, and skills required to be successful. (It would be unfair to students, for example, to test them using the metric system if they had not yet studied it.) The plan does not indicate any emphasis on aligning what is taught and the rigor of instruction with any of the measures of success.

- NAEP is given to a sample of students in grades 4, 8, and 12. It is given in math and reading every two years. TIMSS is given to a sample of students every four years in grades 4 and 8. PIRLS is administered every five years to a sample of students in grade 4. It is unclear how these measures will be used in the mayor's plan. In years when all tests might be given, a great portion of instructional time could be lost to administer the DC-CAS, NAEP, and one of the international tests in grades 4 and 8.

The Task at Hand

The Fenty administration sets out a doctrine of "no excuses" for low performance. The plan pledges to eliminate barriers across agencies to address the many challenges that students face in their lives outside of the classroom and to hold these agencies collectively responsible for student failure. The strategies in the plan are meant to represent major initiatives, but are not meant to be all-inclusive. Indeed, the mayor proposes to eliminate unsuccessful initiatives and put proven strategies in place.

- Given this platform, one would expect to see how lack of success will be determined for current initiatives and what standards will be used to determine a strategy that is proven to work. Many initiatives in the DCPS are new and have had little time in which to succeed. Will they be discarded prematurely and replaced with new initiatives that contradict or confuse the foundation that is being built? Many successful strategies require specific human resources to be in place in order to be effective. One cannot simply impose a strategy that worked in a specific context and expect it to work in any organization or system.

- The plan does not distinguish which strategies are already part of the existing DCPS master education plan and which are solely part of the mayor's proposal.

- While it is true that the school district must focus on strategies that work, little in the mayor's plan indicates that a cohesive focus exists for implementing the strategies in ways that align them clearly with a common goal.

- The plan's authors recognize that to be successful, all adults involved will have to unite and work together. This is true under any configuration of the school system. Indeed, one could wonder why this sense of unity is currently missing in the District of Columbia. What now blocks the political will to work collaboratively with the school system to prepare children to take their place in the community, and the world?

Fundamental Ingredients to Success

The Fenty administration's plan outlines four overarching requirements for success in the DCPS: human capital, world-class service, freedom and flexibility with accountability, and data-driven decision making.

- One would expect the plan to consider these components explicitly and would expect that all plans within the system, including the special education and facilities plans, would be woven together into a single well-considered, realistic plan. These components are not mentioned in the strategies section of the administration's plan.

- The plan calls for more decentralization of decision-making to the schools. Yet the plan does not require that school staff members demonstrate that they have the essential knowledge, skills, and capacity to make quality decisions; nor does the plan specify that time be set aside to give staff members the opportunity to study and make decisions.

- In order to make responsible data-driven decisions, staff must have access to the right data. Many school systems are overwhelmed with data, but have little information. Many districts, moreover, have information, but are unable to make the right kinds of changes to correct the problems revealed. There is nothing in the plan to support staff in addressing these issues.

Section Two

The plan has six major goals, each with three to 11 strategies per goal. The goals as stated are laudable and integral to attaining the desired vision. However, the strategies within those goals are unlikely to lead to their achievement. While the section does outline strategies and activities for each goal, together with a timeframe and some form of measurement, it does not indicate who bears responsibility for the action steps. It remains to be seen whether current staff, new staff, or consultants are envisioned to carry out the plan.

Goal I. Ensure a Challenging Curriculum and Instruction for All Students

Goal I has 11 strategies with components that impact all grade levels and various student populations.

- The strategies do not lead to a challenging curriculum. Four of the 11 strategies, in fact, deal with remedial programs, which are not the same thing as a challenging curriculum.

- The development of human capital and careful implementation of the curriculum are missing from most strategies.

- Coordination and accountability are lacking across programs.

- Many of the proposed strategies appear to be placeholders for some future consideration.

- Measures of success are often very low-level and vague.

- There appears to be little consideration of increased costs and intricacies of implementation of programs such as Expanded Learning Time.

Goal I, Strategy 1: Refine the K-8 comprehensive reading model.

Strategy 1 calls for an unnamed developmentally appropriate intensive reading support initiative for struggling readers in K-3. The strategy requires developing a reading protocol to assess readers at the beginning and end of the year. In grades 6-8, students reading below grade level would have a second reading class taught by a trained reading specialist.

- There are many reading protocols already written and researched for grades K-3. The plan does not state why a new protocol should be developed when there are many commercially available ones.

- The plan faults the DCPS for implementation issues. However, the plan makes no reference to how Strategy 1 will be implemented. The plan would naturally require training on how to administer and interpret the reading test, how to determine what to provide to students to improve results, and how to accelerate student learning to attain grade-level mastery or above. Yet the plan does not mention professional development in these vital areas; nor does the plan mention support for classroom teachers or training for those who would support classroom teachers.

- The plan does not indicate what kinds of reading interventions or initiatives would be employed with struggling readers, or how they would be used in a system where each school would be allowed under the decentralization proposal to decide its own strategies.

- The plan wisely makes the middle school reading program a pilot program, which would allow time to hire trained reading specialists.

- Doubling coursework for middle-school students who are struggling in math and reading has proven successful in other districts when done well. However, the mayor's plan fails to describe how it would handle the effects of the doubling up on staff assignments or on the number of elective courses offered. There is also no description of how these new courses would differ from the initial ones, or what the timing or criteria would be for exiting a student from these additional classes.

- The plan makes no mention of how special education inclusion planning would be meshed with these intervention programs.

Goal I, Strategy 2: Refine the K-8 comprehensive mathematics model.

This strategy is focused on grades 6-8. It would add a second math class for students who were below grade level in these grades. It also calls for math coaches to train and assist teachers on an ongoing basis.

- The plan does not indicate how the success of the Kamras model will be replicated at the two pilot sites other than providing more class time for math.

- The plan mentions expanded learning time as an option. Adding time to the school day is a fine idea. However, there are transportation and custodian considerations involved, as well as the real possibility that the students who most need the opportunity will not stay to take advantage of it. There is also an unmentioned cost factor in terms of funding the program.

Goal I, Strategy 3: Accelerate intensive intervention strategies for lowest-performing high schools.

This strategy calls for developing intervention strategies at the high schools that qualify for reconstitution.

- The plan does not indicate what type of intervention strategies are contemplated, nor how principals or teachers will learn to use the strategies.

- The measure of success for these interventions is merely increased graduation rates, rather than higher student achievement levels, which are critical.

Goal I, Strategy 4: Begin reform initiatives targeted at middle schools.

The strategy has four activities. The first is to set up a pilot Teacher Advancement Program in one school by fall of 2008 using private investment. The second is the exploration of the use of a mandatory intensive remedial program (Eight-PLUS) for students who do not pass eighth grade. The third activity is a reference to Strategy 2, and the final activity expands after-school programs at middle schools.

- The measure of success for the first activity is merely the securing of private funding, not the plan itself, nor the impact of the program.

- The plan does not indicate how the after-school activities are to be selected, funded, coordinated, or evaluated. The plan also does not indicate how after-school tutoring would be linked to classroom work. Yet, under the plan, after-school offerings are to be assessed at the end of the first six months.

Goal I, Strategy 5: Expand access to more rigorous courses than those at the high school level.

This is a worthwhile strategy that calls for expansion of opportunities, as well as courses that would improve the likelihood of students being successful in advanced coursework. It also calls for redefining and staffing an executive director position and developing a comprehensive strategic plan within 60 days of staffing the position.

- This strategy is evaluated by the lowest possible measure—an increase in graduation rates (an important goal to be sure)—rather than by measures of achievement on Advanced Placement or college entrance exams.

Goal I, Strategy 6: Pilot extended learning programs through a competitive grant program.

This strategy proposes extended learning pilots to increase time for science, to double the time set aside for math or intensive reading in middle school, and to increase the number of external partners for music and fine arts, the number foreign language programs, and the amount of "sustained professional development of teachers." The RFP for extended learning programs is to be developed with 90 days with planning grants awarded by December of 2007.

- The plan does not address the coordination and evaluation of this potentially massive program, nor does it indicate what the priorities are.

- The plan does not indicate how these programs will relate to Supplemental Educational Services (SES) programs that already are in place for certain students.

- Professional development is quite vague. The plan does not deal with its content, whether it is to take place during contract time or for extra pay, within what timeframe, and for what purpose.

- The measure of the strategy is solely that it is implemented, rather than the impact or quality of the programs.

- Expanded-day programs do have additional costs that are not mentioned in this plan.

Goal I, Strategy 7: Communicate student performance data to parents and students regularly and in a consistent manner.

This strategy calls for developing a standards-based report card to be implemented in the 2008-09 school year and for redesigning the DC-CAS parent report template that includes information on SES alternatives.

- The plan does not indicate how parents will be re-oriented to the new report card.

- There is no indication of the makeup of the Report Card Committee or how its work will relate to the other projects (remedial courses, advanced courses, expanded-day programs) within this plan.

- Providing parents information on the SES programs is already required by federal law. The plan falls short of requiring information on the effectiveness of the programs by which parents can make an informed decision about their use.

Goal I, Strategy 8: Expand career and technical education.

This strategy appears to focus on developing partnerships with unions and employers for apprenticeship and training programs, as well as on building a new facility.

- There is no indication of how this strategy is linked to the other strategies in the plan. The strategy appears to have its own plan and own life separate from other initiatives envisioned in the overall Fenty administration plan.

- Again, the strategy is very vague about implementation considerations and evaluation of progress and success.

Goal I, Strategy 9: Expand foreign language instruction at all grade levels.

This strategy addresses a real advantage for the Washington, D.C., area.

- The scant funding and planning for this initiative seem to indicate weak commitment. The initiative's phase-in is postponed until 2009-10 for elementary and middle school students. However, this delay may be appropriate in terms of setting priorities.

Goal I, Strategy 10: Expand opportunities for gifted and talented (G/T) students.

The strategy is to study other G/T programs for possible replication.

- The plan includes no vision for expanding G/T opportunities. Beyond researching creative programming for replication and consulting with the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), little else is proposed within the first six months.

- The measurement for success for this goal is vague. Better identification of G/T students and increased quantity and quality of services fail to provide any real indication that the Mayor's office has a firm idea what kind of program it is looking to develop.

Goal I, Strategy 11: Address the needs of English Language Learners (ELLs.)

The strategy calls for training for principals and expanding the Parents as Partners program.

- The plan lacks a vision for addressing the needs of ELL students, as well as any measure of success for program participants.

- The plan includes no strategies to improve instruction for ELLs. Expanding the Parents as Partners program and training principals about meeting the needs of ELL students with no expected outcomes will not ensure challenging curricula and instruction for all students.

Goal II: Teachers and Principals Will Deliver High-Quality Instruction to Every Student

Goal II has five strategies. The first calls for developing a talent pipeline. The second addresses improving teachers' working conditions. The third deals with professional development. The fourth focuses on differentiated compensation and bonus initiatives, while the final strategy addresses equitable staffing patterns.

Goal II, Strategy 1: Develop a talent pipeline for teachers, teacher leaders, and principals.

The three activities under this strategy call for recruiting high-quality teachers and principals; developing a teacher career ladder to the principalship; and developing measures for the human resources department within the district accountability plan, called SchoolStat. The recruitment effort emphasizes aggressive recruitment of principals with proven success, expansion of Teach for America (TFA), and aggressive recruitment of teachers in critical areas through targeted marketing, additional compensation, and partnerships with colleges and the private sector.

- Most urban school districts have the same targeted recruitment focus. The supply of proven principals and teachers is limited.

- Teachers in TFA have a two-year commitment. It would behoove the district to determine the proportion of these teachers who stay longer than two years. The participants in the program are highly dedicated, hard workers. However, teachers are needed for the long term in the DCPS, and there is a cost incurred with TFA.

- The career ladder concept and timeline are to be designed within the first 100 days.

- A bonus program to reward the human resources department for opening the school year with no vacancies and/or meeting recruiting and staffing targets could have the unexpected consequence of filling vacancies for the sake of filling them, rather than finding excellent candidates.

- There is no mention in the plan of how teachers would be retained. Most urban school districts implement aggressive mentoring and induction programs to keep their teachers, rather than having to recruit so many new ones each year.

Goal II, Strategy 2: Improve teacher working conditions.

The single activity within this strategy is to establish an independently administered school survey that somehow will be disaggregated by school, while maintaining the confidentiality of individuals. The results will be incorporated into an accountability measure for principals, and concerns raised are to be addressed in school improvement plans.

- The RFP for the survey is to be developed within 60 days and a vendor identified within 90 days. The plan gives no indication of what the survey will consider as "working conditions."

- The plan does not appear to take into consideration the fact that a principal trying to implement change may make some teachers uncomfortable—with good reason.

Goal II, Strategy 3: Refine professional development for improved instruction.

The strategy allows 120 days to audit current professional development programs for their range, quality, and priority. School-based professional development models will be piloted in two to three more schools in 2007-08 to build teacher capacity in collaboration, data analysis, and adapting practices accordingly. Principals will work on implementing and leading schoolwide reform strategies.

- There is nothing remarkable in this strategy. It should be an ongoing strategy for all school districts.

- The strategy lacks any reference to the impact of professional development on student achievement. Developing a report, writing an implementation plan, and staffing the mentor program in compliance with grant requirements can all be present without a quality professional development program.

Goal II, Strategy 4: Recognize and reward high-performing staff with individual and schoolwide compensation initiatives.

This strategy calls for implementing the differentiated compensation pilot in the current Washington Teachers' Union (WTU) contract for 2007-08. It sets up an exploration of options for additional salary and bonuses for targeted schools to reward principals for meeting targets on school climate and parent engagement measures and rewarding teachers for achieving advanced performance-based certification.

- Whereas the opening portion of the plan stated that student achievement would be of greatest importance, this compensation initiative lacks any reference to meeting student performance targets as a requirement for additional compensation.

Goal II, Strategy 5: Ensure equitable staffing for every school.

The two activities in this strategy deal with exploring a possible incentive program to increase the number of high-performing teachers at low-performing schools and adjusting school-level budgeting to allocate real dollars rather than teaching positions. Principals would be able to allocate funds towards teacher professional development or support. The budget analysis would begin immediately, with the process being implemented in the 2009-10 school year.

- Programs to encourage teachers to work in low-performing schools are worth trying.

- In some districts where school principals have discretion over the use of teaching positions, there is a tendency to hire younger teachers who have lower salaries, and many teachers of noncore subjects find their programs at risk.

Goal III: Safe and Orderly Schools

This goal does not feature a goal statement as the previous goals did. It has five strategies. The first is to ensure that discipline policies are enforced consistently. The second is to reorganize and expand alternative education programs. The third is to train teachers and principals on handling student behavior issues. The fourth calls for strengthened relationships with community partners. The final strategy is to continue and expand the work of the Truancy Taskforce.

Goal III, Strategy 1: Ensure student discipline policies are enforced consistently throughout the school district.

The strategy calls for immediate revision of the current student discipline policy to include alternatives to out-of-school suspension. Implementation will begin with the 2007-08 school year. A handbook will be distributed to principals, teachers, parents, and students, and training will be offered to principals and teachers. Student discipline will be incorporated into the school accountability measures.

- While discipline policy should be enforced consistently, there is nothing in having a handbook and tracking reported infractions that will ensure even application of policy.

- It is unclear whether "offer training to principals and teachers" means that the training is voluntary or mandatory.

- The plan does now show any explicit linkage to the teacher induction program or to particular discipline requirements in special education programming.

Goal III, Strategy 2: Reorganize and expand alternative education programs.

Developing more placement options through assessing and evaluating existing alternative education programs within 100 days is reasonable.

- The plan does not identify who is responsible for conducting the assessment.

Goal III, Strategy 3: Train teachers and principals on best ways to handle student behavior issues.

A community partner is to provide ongoing training to teachers and principals on handling bullying. The plan also calls for evaluating the Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) program for possible expansion.

- There is no mention of how all professional development mentioned in this plan can be accomplished.

- Using a community partner for training on handling bullying and student behavior does not explicitly build in-house capacity to provide the training as needed. Instead, this approach appears to establish ongoing reliance on the community partner.

- The plan does not provide any evidence on whether such training reduces bullying behavior.

- The plan does not indicate who will conduct the PBIS research.

Goal III, Strategy 4: Strengthen relationships with community partners.

The strategy calls for convening meetings with various groups to discuss approaches for dealing with youth violence and gang activity and for developing an action plan within 100 days for implementation in the 2007-08 school year.

- There is no indication of how the professional development regarding the action plan will fit into all of the professional development contained in the Fenty administration's overall plan.

- There also is no indication of how the effectiveness of the resulting program will be measured.

Goal III, Strategy 5: Continue/expand the work of the Truancy Taskforce.

The strategy calls for expanding the work of the taskforce to include dropout prevention and reentry strategies during the 2007-08 school year.

- The strategy appears to be a placeholder for future activity around an important issue.

Goal IV. Develop a Strong System of Accountability Balanced with School-Level Autonomy

There are three strategies within Goal IV. The first strategy call for identifying the first set of tracking measures for districtwide accountability around special education, human resources, and school climate and for orienting employees and managers to the SchoolStat concept, philosophy, and process within 60 days. Department dashboards to measure key functions are to be prepared within 180 days. The second strategy addresses data infrastructure and research partnerships. The last strategy deals with decentralization of resources and decision-making.

Goal IV, Strategy 1: Develop a districtwide SchoolStat accountability system.

- The proposed tracking measures do not mention student achievement or attainment of district goals.

- The plan does not appear to address coordination or oversight of the accountability measures.

Goal IV, Strategy 2: Establish data infrastructure and research partnerships that allow effective analysis.

This strategy calls for the immediate implementation of a statewide data system with unique student and teacher identifiers. It initiates a "Schools Research Consortium" within 90 days to inform policy decisions. Another activity calls for identifying a researcher within 60 days to begin a value-added study of teacher effectiveness and data analysis within nine months.

- A good feature of the strategy calls for "bad data reports" to become part of the SchoolStat accountability measure for principals. This step is likely to reduce data entry errors arising at the school level.

- It is unclear how the Schools Research Consortium would be formed, who would coordinate its activity, and who would monitor the quality of the research and data results.

Goal IV, Strategy 3: Shift resources and decision-making to the schools, and away from the central administration.

Decentralization of decisions to those working closest with students lies at the core of this strategy. The activity indicates that it will be a phased-in program for earned autonomy. The baseline is to be established with the first 100 days, with innovation pilot schools to be identified.

- The parameters for earning autonomy are not specified.

- Central office academic positions are to be redeployed to schools, with full reorganization of the central office within the 2009-10 school year.

- As with any major shift in responsibilities, careful implementation is required. There is no indication of who will coordinate the planning, training, implementation, and evaluation of the initiative. Staying focused on what will remain central office functions versus school functions is essential to avoid mistakes made in many school systems during their move to decentralize. Otherwise, the instructional program can fracture into so many different configurations, teachers can receive no support, and students can face overwhelming differences from school to school.

- In redeploying staff to the schools, attention must be paid to how central functions that define curriculum content, timelines, and adjustments based on data analysis will remain in place. Without such a core, the district becomes a system of schools instead of a school system. With student mobility across schools, there must be continuity of expectations within content areas. A school may go beyond the expectations, but must ensure that certain concepts, knowledge, and skills are consistently taught within a grade level.

Goal V. Ensure World-Class Service

This goal consists of five strategies that call for developing a service audit and improvement plan, service standards, service training, strengthened employee communications, and assessment of business operations. Except for the lack of indication of who will be in charge of this program and how its success will be measured, the strategies within this goal could lead to its successful implementation.

Goal V, Strategy 1: Conduct a comprehensive service audit and service improvement program.

One activity in this strategy involves conducting an audit using secret shoppers, beginning within 100 days, to determine baseline standard for responsiveness and service for parents and visitors in unnamed key areas. A second activity involves developing a comprehensive approach to service improvement, including management modeling,

incentive programs, training, and internal/external communication plans. Such a focus could serve to improve the functioning of schools and departments.

Goal V, Strategy 2: Develop service standards.

The development of service standards is to begin within 100 days.

- Each department and school appears to be in charge of developing its own monitoring system for use in employees' performance appraisals. This tactic could lead to disparate standards designed to be attainable rather than reflect continuous improvement.

Goal V, Strategy 3: Provide service training and communication on customer service initiatives.

Ongoing training will be offered to all DCPS employees on the service standards.

- There is no measure of the impact of the training to be offered.

- There is no indication of how much training will be involved and how it will be prioritized for school staff who must also be involved with special education, reading, and/or math initiatives.

Goal V, Strategy 4: Strengthen employee communications.

Work on internal communications using a variety of tools and methods will begin during the 2006-07 school year. The strategy also calls for developing an employee feedback system to monitor satisfaction levels and to identify key issues and concerns. This annual survey is to be written and distributed to teachers at the end of the 2006-07 school year.

- The plan gives no indication of who will develop, distribute, and analyze the survey instrument.

- Nor does the plan indicate how the survey will be funded.

- Employee communication is often enhanced in any organization by the creation of cross-functional teams to work on various systemwide problems. It is puzzling why this commonly used strategy was not suggested in the mayor's plan.

- In general, the mayor's plan appears to rely to a large degree on outside contractors and consultants to do a lot of the work. Adequate planning and coordination of this external expertise will not be as simple as writing an RFP and hiring a consulting organization. If not done with care, a great deal of money can be spent without any lasting impact. It will also not help to build internal capacity, unless explicitly designed to do so.

Goal V, Strategy 5: Assess business operations.

This strategy calls for evaluating all key business operations within 100 days. These operations include human resources, procurement, transportation, food service, inventory management, warehousing and distribution, and graphic production. Determinations will be made about how to improve services or whether better performance can be achieved through outsourcing.

- No indication is given as to who will conduct the evaluation and how criteria will be set for whether a service can be outsourced.

- There is no description in the plan about how city hall will use the results of numerous other reviews that have already been done on the same business operations, or how the new assessments will build on the previous ones.

Goal VI. Build on Our Community Assets

This goal has nine strategies. The strategies include developing an ombudsman program, redesigning the DCPS Web site, improving communication and collaboration with parents and stakeholders, expanding public engagement, and strengthening community partnerships and volunteers. Additionally, it proposes to increase principal accountability for parent and community outreach, to host regular media briefings, to partner with the Executive Office of the Mayor's (EOM's) Office of Parent and Community Involvement to launch a parent academy, and to strengthen local school restructuring teams (LSRTs).

Goal VI, Strategy 1: Develop ombudsman program.

Communication establishing the Office of the Ombudsman is to begin within 100 days.

- It is not clear how this new function will actually be tied to the operation of DCPS. The plan is most unclear on this point.

Goal VI, Strategy 2: Redesign and restructure Web site.

The redesign is to begin within 100 days.

- There is no indication of how accountability and student achievement information will be featured on the Web site or what criteria will be used to determine whether the site serves its intended publics well.

Goal VI, Strategy 3: Improve communication and collaboration with parents and stakeholders.

This strategy involves developing packets (such as parent handbooks) about the programs, services, and support that the DCPS offers. Development of the parent packets is to begin within 100 days.

- Other initiatives also are being launched in the first 100 days. It is unclear how much information on these initiatives is to be part of the material distributed to parents.

- The plan does not include a way to evaluate whether parents and community members find the packets useful.

Goal VI, Strategy 4: Expand public engagement.

The two activities under this strategy indicate that public engagement is defined as providing communication between the DCPS and community stakeholders. These activities include distributing service feedback cards and conducting opinion polls.

- The plan does not indicate who will coordinate the working group to be established within 100 days to develop details of these feedback activities.

Goal VI, Strategy 5: Strengthen community partnerships and volunteers.

Though no timeframe is given, the activities call for strengthening community partnerships that promote student academic success, student mentoring, and a safe environment. Summit meetings with faith leaders will be held to provide additional support for students at risk of failure in school.

- The plan gives no indication of how volunteer efforts will be coordinated or how volunteers will be screened to work with students in schools.

- The plan does not indicate how volunteers will be informed of areas of need within a particular school.

- The plan does not indicate how volunteers will be trained to align their efforts with student needs.

- Further, the plan does not indicate how volunteer efforts will be evaluated.

Goal VI, Strategy 6: Increase principal accountability for parent and community outreach.

The strategy calls for placing parent and community outreach as part of the principal accountability framework in 2008-09, along with training on ways to provide effective outreach.

- The plan does not indicate how proactive outreach will be measured.

- There is no indication of who will provide the training for principals or how that training will fit into other training required in the plan.

Goal VI, Strategy 7: Host regular media briefings.

The chancellor's office is to hold regular media briefings on important DCPS news and information, beginning in the first 100 days.

Goal VI, Strategy 8: Partner with the Executive Office of the Mayor's (EOM's) Office of Parent and Community Involvement to launch a parent academy.

Parent academies to be developed in partnership with local businesses and organizations will be offered at no charge at area schools and other locations, beginning in the 2007-08 school year. Possible topics include GED classes, computer competency, family literacy, and mathematics.

- The plan does not indicate how the academies will be developed and run, or where funding for them will be found.

Goal VI, Strategy 9: Strengthen local school restructuring teams (LSRTs).

The strategy has only one activity listed. Training for administrators and parent leaders is to take place in 2007-08.

- The only measure of success listed is stronger school improvement plans and budgets.

- This activity appears to be a placeholder for future action. There is no explicit link between this activity and the earlier goal for decentralization.

- The plan gives no indication of who will provide the training, what the content of the training will be, the amount of training required—or what the purpose of the training is.

- Restructuring does not ensure improved student achievement.

Section Three

This section outlines areas in which specific targets will be developed for meeting DCPS goals for the 2010-11 school year.

Student Achievement Outcomes

The mayor's plan describes the baseline for student performance on the DC-CAS, NAEP, Advanced Placement, and SAT. Under the plan, targets are to be set for student achievement on those tests, as well as for improving graduation rates and narrowing the achievement gaps among subgroups.

- There is no mention of the international measures from the first section of the plan.

- There is no mention of increasing the numbers of students taking advanced courses.

- There is no explicit plan or strategy for raising student achievement scores on these tests.

Instructional Staff

This section mentions that evaluations will include student outcome measures and research-based assessment of instructional practice. Filling of positions in instructional support are also to be measurable goals.

- There seems to be a disconnect between incentive pay proposals and the measures set out in this section.

Conditions for Effective Teaching and Learning

Under the Fenty plan, baseline standards are to be developed for classroom materials, supplies, and technology. The proportion of classrooms meeting those standards will be tracked. Similarly standards will be developed for co-curricular activities. The proportion of schools receiving top rankings in the accountability system will also be tracked. It is not clear what the standards are meant to accomplish.

Safe and Orderly Schools

The level of safety will be determined by surveys of students indicating that they feel safe at school. Similarly, parent responses to the survey will also be used. The plan implies that a safe schools audit will be conducted, but it is not explicitly mentioned among the activities or strategies in the plan. One indicator mentioned involves a change in the number of state-reportable incidents of inappropriate behavior per 1,000 students. It is not clear from the plan what would be done about the underlying problem, however.

World-Class Service

The percentage of employees, parents, and community members who agree DCPS provides timely, accurate and responsive serve on annual satisfaction surveys and polls would also be assessed.

- Developing and conducting polls and surveys is another cost that is not described or itemized, although the use of community polls can sometimes be helpful. It is unclear who is to be responsible for this activity.

- It is unclear how many people will be polled, how they will be selected, and how the data will be used.

Strong Parent and Community Connections

Again, survey data are the source of the indicators in this area.

Appendix 1. Description of SchoolStat Accountability System

The SchoolStat accountability system is to be designed to classify school performance relative to pre-determined standards, rewards, and sanctions. These measures are to be linked to the accountability system. And a communication plan to inform education stakeholders about the accountability system criteria is to be developed.

Timeline for Development

The system is to be fully operational for the 2008-09 school year. The Chancellor is to report to the Executive Office of the Mayor on a quarterly basis on the development of the system.

Timeline for EOM Oversight

The system shall be piloted in the 2007-08 school year without rewards or sanctions. The system will be evaluated after two full school years.

SchoolStat Data Dashboard

A data dashboard with a limited number of indicators selected by the EOM is to be designed to provide a concise summary of district performance in a clear manner that will communicate the EOM's priorities to the community. The data dashboard is to be reviewed and updated at least annually.

Appendix 2. Timeline for Various Program Activities in Mayor's Instructional Plan

Planning

The following activities are called for in the mayor's plan—

Plan	Goal, Strategy	First 100 days	2007-08	2008-09	Later
Advanced Learning Programs across all high schools comprehensive strategic plan	Goal I, Strategy 5	X			
Teacher Advancement Program	Goal I, Strategy 4	Identify pilot		Implement	
Extended Learning Pilot	Goal I, Strategy 6	RFP		Implement	
Standards-Based Report Card	Goal I, Strategy 7	Committee			
DC-CAS Parent Report Template	Goal I, Strategy 7	Redesign			
Career and Technology Education expansion	Goal I, Strategy 8		One additional program	Second program	
Expand foreign language instruction at all grade levels	Goal I, Strategy 9		Identify potential partners and sites		Phase in elementary programs 2009-10
Career Ladder plan	Goal II, Strategy 1	X			
Incentive programs	Goal II, Strategy 5	Begin analysis			
School-level budget process to allocate dollars rather than teaching positions	Goal II, Strategy 5				
Discipline policy handbook	Goal III, Strategy 1	Policy revision	Implement		
Alternative Education assessment	Goal II, Strategy 2	X			
Action plan to deal with youth violence and gang activity	Goal III, Strategy 4	Planning	Implement		
Internal communications program	Goal V, Strategy 4				
Business operations evaluation with possible outsourcing	Goal V, Strategy 5	Audit	Implement improvement plans		

Implied Plans

Plan	Goal, Strategy	First 100 days	2007-08	2008-09	Later
Refine the K-8 comprehensive reading model	Goal I, Strategy 1				
Implementation plan for intervention strategies at the high school.					
Middle School Reforms	Goal I, Strategy 4	Identify pilot site			
Expand opportunities for talented and gifted students	Goal I, Strategy 10	No timeline			
Targeted recruitment plan	Goal II, Strategy 1	X			
Develop, administer, and analyze survey instruments to gather teacher information on working conditions and stakeholder perceptions of schools and department responsiveness	Goal II, Strategy 2; Goal V, Strategy 4; Goal VI, Strategy 4	X			
New Teacher Induction and Mentoring program	Goal II, Strategy 3	X			
Professional Development	Goal II, Strategy 3	Audit			
Differentiated compensation	Goal II, Strategy 4		Rollout models		
School-level budget process to allocate dollars rather than teaching positions	Goal II, Strategy 5				X
Expanded work for the Truancy Task Force	Goal III, Strategy 5		X		
Development of SchoolStat tracking measures	Goal IV, Strategy 1				
Schools Research Consortium	Goal IV, Strategy 2	X			
Teacher Effectiveness study	Goal IV, Strategy 2	Identify researcher	Analysis		
Decentralization	Goal IV, Strategy 3	Baseline		Implement	
Reorganization of central office functions	Goal IV, Strategy 3			X	
Service improvement and monitoring system	Goal V, Strategies 1 and 2	Audit			

Ombudsman program	Goal VI, Strategy 1	X			
Redesign web site	Goal VI, Strategy 2	X			
Develop and disseminate parent packets	Goal VI, Strategy 2	X			
Coordinate volunteer efforts, evaluate and make recommendations for improvement of community partnerships that promote student success.	Goal VI, Strategy 5	Not stated			
Parent and community outreach	Goal VI, Strategy 6			X	
Media briefings	Goal VI, Strategy 7	X			
Parent Academy courses	Goal VI, Strategy 8		X		
School Restructuring	Goal VI, Strategy 9		X		

- A large number of plans are required, but there is no indication of how these plans and activities are coordinated, aligned, or integrated.

- Evaluation of the plans is not a strong component or is not clearly states.

- Monitoring of implementation is not always clear.

Appendix 3. Timeline for Various Professional Development Activities in Mayor's Instructional Plan

Explicitly Stated Professional Development

Content	Teachers	Principals	Parents	Timeline
New report card template (Goal I, Strategy 7)	X	X		School Year 2007-08
ELL training (Goal I, Strategy 11)		X		Ongoing within principals' institute
Discipline policy revision	X	X	Handbook	Policy revision, immediately. 2007-08 implementation.
Student behavior (handling bullying, positive behavior intervention)	X	X		2006-07
Service improvement and incentive program	X	X and department administrators	X	Ongoing
Parent and community outreach		X		2008-09
Parent Academy			X	2007-08
Local School Restructuring Teams	X	X	X	2007-08

Implied Professional Development

Content	Teachers	Principals	Parents	Timeline
Comprehensive reading model (Goal I, Strategy 1)	X	X		2007-08
K-8 comprehensive mathematics model	X	X		
Intervention strategies for high schools	X	X	X	
Decentralization knowledge and	X	X		

skills (decision making, budget issues)				
Special Education (see separate plan)	X	X	X	Ongoing
Talented and Gifted identification and programs	X	X		