

Statement from School-Within-School at Goding,  
a Citywide DC Public Elementary School,  
to the State Board of Education  
Regarding OSSE's Draft School Accountability Plan under ESSA  
March 15, 2017

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on OSSE's accountability plan today as well as at the community meetings you co-hosted across the District in February. We were pleased to see in your recently released recommendations that you had been listening. Your recommendations include some key steps to address the significant concerns we have with OSSE's plan, and we urge you to hold your ground on them. You have a vital role as the voices of our community.

We also urge you to tell OSSE that submitting the plan in April is not reasonable or realistic. It was clear at the community forums that parents and teachers do not think the draft plan is at all adequate. Let's take the time to put together a thoughtful plan that reflects our values.

We want to share some specific concerns from our school's perspective. School-Within-School at Goding is a PK3 to 5th grade DC public school with citywide enrollment. It exemplifies DCPS commitment to innovative, high-quality education. The school was founded in 1995 by four teachers who wanted to apply the Reggio Emilia education philosophy—which was first developed in postwar Italy by a psychologist—as it has evolved through continuous research on education. Central to our school's approach is that teachers listen to children, observe them, understand their thinking, structure activities and the environment to support and extend their thinking, and draw from their interests to plan for future learning. We have found these methods to be extremely effective for our students. And our school is drawing families from all over the city who want this progressive approach to education for their own children.

The success of our school is due to enthusiastic teachers and engaged parents dedicated to seeing our children as individuals. This is the kind of innovation that is jeopardized by a top-down, narrowly focused, testing-driven accountability system. We are deeply concerned that OSSE's draft plan does not do enough to move us away from that. Tying 80% of a school's assessment to a single test guarantees that teachers will feel pressured to teach to that test. When parents raised concerns at the community meetings about this emphasis on testing, Superintendent Kang and her staff repeatedly noted that half of the weight, 40%, measures growth rather than proficiency. It's unclear why we would weight proficiency so heavily when weighting growth is the answer to so many concerns. Regardless, whether we weight growth or proficiency, it's all still based on a single test. We must think carefully about the incentives we create when we set up these accountability standards. Accountability that undermines a teacher's ability to meet student needs is not worth the price.

In light of these concerns, we support SBOE's recommendations to expand the weight of non-test factors and to include a Well-Rounded Education measure. We appreciate that you are

listening to our concerns and incorporating them into your recommendations, and we will continue to support you as you stand your ground.

On behalf of the SWS Community,

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