

State Board of Education
March 15, 2017
Public Hearing Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
Testimony of Simona Gerhardt, Teacher, Wilson High School

My name is Simona Gerhardt. I have been teaching at Wilson High School for 12 years. I have seen the district go through many changes. Throughout all these transitions, school achievement continues to be a challenge, but thankfully, we now have a wonderful opportunity to change that.

Here are two indicators that show the need to change DCPS leadership strategy:

Indicator number 1 - The Achievement Gap

I am quoting from the Consolidated State Plan draft:

“The results of PARCC from 2015-2016 showed us that only about one-quarter of DC students were on track for college and career readiness, and there are serious and persistent gaps in outcomes between specific groups of students.”

Indicator number 2 - Teacher and principal turnover.

Michael Alison Chandler said to Kaya Henderson on the Washington Post: “If every year you are replacing a third of your staff, something is wrong”.

My proposal to change these 2 negative indicators is:

Create an Accountability School Plan that supports Chancellor’s Wilson vision. Chancellor Wilson stated: “We want students to thrive. We want to make sure that they are enjoying schools. They should like it. For students to like it, adults have to like it”.

He also stated: “Beyond student joy and excitement around school, students must be taught to think critically”. (Taken from the Kojo Nnamdi show). Standardized tests do not measure critical thinking.

Chancellor Wilson’ vision can happen, and I want it to happen, but it can happen only

1. If OSSE changes the deadline to September 18th to allow Chancellor Wilson time to give feedback.

2. If OSSE reduces the weight on Academic Achievement and understands that Academic Achievement is the byproduct of School Environment.
3. If our educational leaders learn from the corporate and the military world how
 - a) to hold people accountable based on the values, vision and mission of the organization,
 - b) and also, if they learn how to measure an effective school working environment.

Our students need an accountability plan that supports and reflects the importance of School Environment and supports Chancellor Wilson's vision.

(A great resource to make this happens is *Creating Cultures of Thinking* by Ron Ritchhart)

Thank you for your time.