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Concerns with school budget process; Addressing Covid; Dashboard instead of STAR school rating.

Updates/Calendar: Mendelson @W3EdNet, DCTAG, Wilson name change, COVID resources

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Calendar Events: W3EdNet-Monday, Feb 7, 7PM

DC Council Chair Phil Mendelson will join the next meeting of the **Ward 3 - Wilson Feeder Education Network (W3EdNet)** on Monday, February 7 at 7pm via Zoom (link below). The meeting is scheduled just as budget season is moving into gear, so bring your questions on that, how the city and DCPS are handling COVID, the need for more schools/space!!!!, issues around mayoral control, and whatever else is on your mind.

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://interactivestrategies.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMpfu-qrjgoEtLO85eJYUkUnHgUUH6U5GCS>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

*Quick Updates:
Wilson Name, DC TAG*

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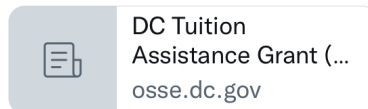
Wilson for 20 years and for Vincent Reed, Asst. Principal at Wilson, Wilson principal for a year, then DCPS Superintendent. Next step: The proposal must be reviewed by Congress. (!!!)

--Applications for DCTAG open next week, on February 1. The DCTAG Application opens NEXT WEEK on February 1st! Learn more at



DCTAG @DC_TAG · 11h

The clock is ticking! The DCTAG Application opens NEXT WEEK on February 1st! Don't miss your chance to receive up to \$10,000 for college tuition costs. Learn more at



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COVID Resources

H/T to Janney PTA for this great list!

- ****Take-home kits** are available at the Tenley Library, Chevy Chase Library, and Palisades Recreation Center, among other locations,
- ****Tests** can be delivered to your door through [Pixel by Labcorp](#),
- ****Self-collected swab test** with 1-2 days turnaround after arrival through [Curative](#)
- ****In-home testing** can be arranged through Ready Responders at [\(202\) 602-0814](#),
- ****Walk-up testing** is available at select DC Fire Stations free of charge (please complete [online registration](#) prior to arriving).
- ****Private options** like [SameDayTesting](#) are FREE WITH INSURANCE and have multiple in-person and drive-through locations in Georgetown and Bethesda. When booking, you

options.

DCPS School Budgets

DC Council considers two bills to limit damage of DCPS school budget process

[At a special hearing last Thursday](#), DC Council Chairman Phil Mendelson proposed two different bills designed to curb some of the most damaging aspects of the D.C. Public Schools' (DCPS) current budget process--the unpredictability, which leaves schools unable to plan and the volatility, which can subject schools to sudden destabilizing budget cuts.

The first bill ([Bill 24-570](#) "Schools First in Budgeting Amendment Act of 2021") **would require that schools get funded at least at the level of the previous year's budget plus inflation, with only remaining funds being available to fund the Central Office.** The second ([Bill 24-571](#) "Schools Full Budgeting Amendment Act of 2021"), according to Chairman Mendelson, **would require that the annual budget for each local school within DCPS "is no less than the school's budget for the current school year."**

The hearing precedes the release from DCPS of both its budget proposals for next school year and its long-awaited new budget model (see below). Over a dozen public witnesses testified before the Council on the two proposals.

Broad agreement on issues raised by bills

Members of the public offered their own stories to fill out a picture of the broken budget process. Multiple witnesses agreed that in the past, DCPS budgets have

- ****** Provided budgets to principals and LSAT's too late in the process, preventing school communities from thoughtfully weighing in on the proposals and considering alternative.

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- ** Penalized large schools (For more on this, see [testimony from Stephen Kletter](#)),
- ** [Spent far more per student on central office staff](#) than similarly sized and nearby districts
- ** [Misused the funds provided by the city](#) to specifically support students who are classified as at-risk (AR). This misuse has been established in [this report](#) by the City Auditor.
- ** Lacked transparency as to why different schools got more and fewer dollars—and about the new budget model.
- ** Too frequently changed the rules--for example, pushing new Central Office services onto local school budgets or requiring schools to add new positions without adding budget dollars

Proposals aim right--but raise new problems, don't go far enough

The public witnesses appreciated that the Council Chair's bills were aimed at the right problems but worried that aspects of them could cause other problems. Many who testified stressed that, atop DCPS budget problems, there are overarching problems with how the Council itself—and the city more broadly--handle the education budget.

- ** Under the proposals, staff costs, currently based on average staff salaries, would be based on actual salaries. Witnesses worried that such a budget model would likely incentivize schools to replace more senior, higher paid teachers with new, less-experienced teachers, at a time when the district is already facing very serious problems with teacher retention.
- ** One witness (Cathy Reilly, from C4DC, the Coalition for DC Schools and Communities) talked about the importance of prioritizing the health and quality of DCPS at-right neighborhood schools at a time when many neighborhoods have lost their local schools as charter schools proliferated.
- ** Others raised the ongoing concern that while the DC Council can—and has--raised many concerns about the DCPS budget, in the end, DCPS has often just ignored the Council. As one witness (Betsy Wolf--education policy analyst, W6 parent) said, when there is a dispute between the Council and DCPS about budget issues, “Council loses and DCPS wins.”

Witnesses also noted that it was hard to know how the two models would affect actual budgets until it could be modeled on the upcoming budget.

New DCPS budget model and proposed budgets coming...

Partly in response to the criticism above, DC Public Schools has promised a new budget process and new budget rules. While DCPS has held discussions with stakeholders around proposed general principles, stakeholders had hoped to see and discuss the proposed model before it was launched. That is not to be. In response to the testimony and the bills, DCPS Chancellor Ferebee said the proposed school budgets and new budget model would be available some time in February, hopefully in the earlier part of the month.

[See here for link to budget hearing.](#)

Council Hearing Schedule

If you'd like to testify, sign up with the attached links.

Budget:

March 2: Public education agency performance oversight hearing; [sign up here](#)

March 28: Public education agency budget hearing; [sign up here](#)

Other ed issues:

February 2: Hearing on special education policies; sign up [is here](#)

March 10: Status of a DCPS middle school in Center City; sign up [is here](#)

March 11: Hearing on [bill 24-428](#), on redefining attendance; sign up [is here](#)

COVID

Keeping schools open--and safe--is the right goal... and a challenge

Back to school testing is a big success...

DC Public Schools are doing everything possible to keep schools

back-to school testing effort in which virtually every student and staff member tested themselves and reported it to DCPS, and DCPS schools were able to assure that only those who tested negative returned to school after Winter break. There were hiccups, concerns, and of course everyone didn't test. But, by and large it was a big success. I stood outside Eaton Elementary and talked with the families and staff who were picking up and handing out tests. I can say from that experience, it went super-smoothly. Thanks to DCPS for committing to do this again after other long breaks.

Weekly testing and reporting ... fixes still needed

At the same time, I get—and have been getting all school year--many emails from parents and staff raising concerns about whether enough is being done to keep the people in the schools safe. Specifically, I heard over and over again that schools weren't meeting the goal of testing 10% of asymptomatic students and staff each week; it took months before that goal was close to reached in most schools. But even when the testing quota was met, the results often weren't communicated to school communities or even close contacts reliably or quickly. Very often, families were aware that classmates and even close contacts had contracted COVID days before they heard anything from the school.

DC Council adopts CM Robert White bill requiring more reliable COVID reporting

In response, the DC Council unanimously adopted a bill by Council Member Robert White (At-large) aimed at addressing these constant issues. According to White, the bill will help schools stay open by preventing Covid spread and will “better shore up in-school resources so that school staff are burning out less and can focus more on education.” Specifically, the bill requires DCPS to:

- Notify parents or guardians within 24 hours of a positive case in their classroom
- Report which schools still don't have on staff a special COVID coordinator and a regular substitute teacher, which they were promised in October.
- Report publicly the percentage of students in each school who received asymptomatic testing each week

incentive to go to school if infected), more asymptomatic testing during surges, and making sure that every school is equipped to have outdoor lunch.

In addition, there continue to be issues around allowing a virtual option for a broader group of students and around finding the best formula for making the new test-to-stay policy do its work of both keeping kids in school--and keeping the school safe.

To see the discussion on Robert White's bill and Council concerns, [click this link](#) and go to 54:40.

Please [let me know](#) how things are going in your school and any suggestions you have.

DC State Board of Education

State Board of Education recommends replacing DC's STAR school rating with easy-to-use "dynamic dashboard"



Summary. Douglass High School is a school community in Ward # which serves ### students. We pride ourselves on our many special programs, including x, y, z, and especially our ###.

<p>School Climate Very Strong</p> <p>School Climate tells us whether a school's values, attitudes, and culture are creating the nurturing, challenging environment that typically leads students to strong academic growth in the future.</p> <p>LEARN MORE</p>	<p>Well-Rounded Education Neutral</p> <p>Well-Rounded Education refers to the extent to which elementary schools provide adequate time for science, social studies, and the arts.</p> <p>LEARN MORE</p>
<p>Academic Growth Strong</p> <p>Academic Growth tells us how much students' math and reading scores rose in the last year. Researchers regard Growth as a strong measure of school effectiveness.</p> <p>LEARN MORE</p>	<p>Teachers Neutral</p> <p>Teacher Retention, Experience, and Diversity captures the percentage of teachers who have returned from the previous year, their years of teaching, and their racial/ethnic diversity.</p> <p>LEARN MORE</p>
<p>Equitable Growth Neutral</p> <p>Equitable Student Growth tells us the extent to which a school is providing needed attention to students who are designated at-risk, with disabilities, English-language learners and from different racial/ethnic groups.</p> <p>LEARN MORE</p>	<p>Academic Proficiency Weak</p> <p>Proficiency tells us how many students have reached the designated "proficient" score. Researchers say proficiency reflects family income more than school effectiveness. Proficiency is our goal for every student, but a school's ability to lift students to proficiency is best seen in the school's Growth score.</p> <p>LEARN MORE</p>

After two years of discussion and research, the [SBOE voted unanimously to recommend that DC eliminate the current practice of rating every school with 1-5 stars](#). The annual school rating has been

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rating will resume (presumably in 2023, though that's not official) unless the Office of the State Superintendent (OSSE) eliminates it and builds out a replacement.

The Board resolved that the rating as it existed was biased against schools with a high percentage of students at-risk, giving low ratings to such schools even if/when their students progressed academically as rapidly as schools with higher ratings. A [previous report from the Board](#) includes evidence for this finding. Board members also lamented how the current rating system with its heavy reliance on test scores often put pressure on schools to emphasize tested subjects (reading and math) and led schools to squeeze out history-social studies, science, and the arts.

The Board proposal would replace the misleading rating with an easy-to-use data dashboard (above) that would give parents the ability to see quickly how schools fared on different indicators of school quality. The indicators would include those based on testing but would include different broader indicators as well. The data would also aid school communities in identifying their schools' strengths and needs. The Board hopes that the data in the dashboard can also serve as a trigger for needed, targeted support to schools. (See [attached article from Washington Informer for further info.](#))

With these recommendations, it now falls to OSSE to work with its experts, the public, and the Board to develop a detailed technical proposal for submission to the federal Education Department. The ED, along with the Board, must approve the new proposal.

Send me any comments/suggestions you have on this!

Keep in touch

As always, if you have thoughts on the above or other suggestions, feel free to email me, ruth4schools@yahoo.com

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