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Council Chair Phil Mendelson talks education with Ward 3/Wilson Feeder Education Network, Tomorrow, Monday, March 11, 2019

Ruth Wattenberg, Ward 3 Member, DC State Board of Education.

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Event

***Tomorrow night:
Come Talk Education
with DC Council Chairman Phil Mendelson!***

***Monday, March 11, 7PM
Tenley-Friendship Public Library***

Join the **W3/Wilson Feeder Education Network** for a discussion with DC Council Chair Phil Mendelson.

As of this year, the Council's education work is handled jointly by the Education Committee and the Committee of the Whole, chaired by Mendelson. Meaning: In a way that is different from before this change, **Chrmn Mendelson will be more deeply involved in virtually all of the Council's education work.**

What's his vision for education? Do you have concerns about school budgets? Overcrowding? What about the Mayor's proposal to lease out the Old Hardy School for a generation? How can our DC school system, currently under mayoral control, be more responsive to the needs of school communities and their families? What issues are you, your schools, and kids facing?

Hope to see you!

News

Mayor calls for emergency legislation to lease out Old Hardy School for long term, despite schools' need for space

Immediately following a DC Public Schools/Community Working Group (CWG) report detailing the serious current and future overcrowding that currently afflicts schools in the Wilson High School feeder pattern, Mayor Bowser asked the DC Council to pass

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DCPS/CWG [report](#) here.

Ward 3 Councilwoman Mary Cheh has already sent a letter to her Council colleagues asking them to reject the emergency legislation.

See next story for summary of findings from DCPS/CWG report, demonstrating the clear need for Old Hardy School to be returned to the DC Public Schools inventory, after having been leased out to private schools for a generation.

Ward 3/Wilson Feeder Schools: Already overcrowded. And now, 25% or more enrollment increases projected at many schools

Two chancellors and many, many months (nearly two years) ago, DC Public Schools convened the Community Working Group on school overcrowding—with representatives from every Ward 3 and Wilson Feeder school, representatives from the Ward 3/Wilson Feeder Education Network and CM Mary Cheh’s office, and myself—to work with DCPS to define the area’s overcrowding issues and identify solutions.

[The Working Group's report](#) was published in February, followed by [a letter from the Ward 3 EdNet](#).

First, **Thank You DCPS!** While this discussion was long overdue, it was very much appreciated by those of us involved with area schools.

Second, while the general findings are not surprising to anyone familiar with local schools, the report attaches real numbers to the overcrowding problem and offers ideas for going forward. Specifically, the report says:

- As of *last* school year, 10 out of 15 Wilson feeder schools were already at or above 100% utilization (p4)—even though full utilization is defined as 95% capacity, since, by that point, all kinds of scheduling options are precluded. (p13)
- All but two schools in the feeder pattern have grown over the last five years—with “double digit growth across the elementary schools and 18% growth at Deal Middle School.” The only schools that didn't grow were two schools that were in swing space (which typically lowers enrollment) (p5)
- “Many buildings are already built to their maximum footprint and do not have space to expand on-site.” (p5)
- By 2025, the high end forecast has Deal’s enrollment increasing some 50% to 2253 (from last year’s 1507), many elementary schools increasing by 20-25% or more, and Hardy up by nearly 20%. (p36)

Additionally, a study by the DC Auditor projects that Wilson's enrollment will rise to over 2300 students by the mid-2020's. That's 700 students over the school's capacity—a number larger than the size of most DC high schools.

No One Solution Solves the Problem

The size of the challenge suggests that it won't be solved by a single solution: The DCPS report offers general solutions options, including **additional capacity** to be gained through leasing, purchasing, or constructing buildings; **policy changes**; and **co-location** of new school space, perhaps at a college. The report is also clear that “investing in the long-term strategy to improve DCPS school options outside of the Wilson High School

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proposals, including:

- *New schools in the feeder pattern.* There are short-term and smaller scale solutions that can help. But any viable solution to thousands of new students entering an already overcrowded system must include new buildings, whether purchased, leased, or constructed.
- *Reopening the Old Hardy School*, now leased by a private school.

“The Old Hardy School—the only DCPS building in the boundaries of the feeder pattern not currently in use by DCPS—could be reopened and modernized. The location is ideal as it sits adjacent to the Hardy Recreation Center, providing ample space for play and outdoor recreation. It is also close to Stoddert and Key, two very overcrowded elementary schools.”
- “Increased capacity in the Wilson feeder pattern must be coupled with *strengthening and improving schools across the city.*”
- *Improved DC options outside the ward*, including language immersion and magnet programs could reduce the demand.

In the words of the letter,

"Not using the Old Hardy School, when the city already owns the space, would be fiscally irresponsible in the extreme. And it would also be an insult to the rest of the city if precious resources that otherwise would not have been needed had to be used to acquire private space and construct additional buildings when many schools in other wards desperately need to be modernized or renovated.

Email Council Members: Please don't let the Mayor give away the only unused public school building left in the area!

Please take a moment to email Councilmembers and ask them to reject the Mayor's call to lease out Old Hardy School. For more details on the proposal and the message that needs to be sent to the Council, [see this letter](#) sent to DC Councilmembers by W3/Wilson Feeder EdNet Co-Chairs Brian Doyle and Melody Molinoff and visit the [Keep Old Hardy Public website](#).

Here's the email list for DC Councilmembers:

pmendelson@dccouncil.us, jevans@dccouncil.us vgray@dccouncil.us, callen@dccouncil.us, abonds@dccouncil.us dgrosso@dccouncil.us, twhite@dccouncil.us bnadeau@dccouncil.us sjevans@dccouncil.us btodd@dccouncil.us, rwhite@dccouncil.us esilverman@dccouncil.us csetlow@dccouncil.us

cc: ruth4schools@yahoo.com, mcheh@dccouncil.us

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

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