

Chairman Gray and Members of the City Council,

My name is Mark Simon. I'm an active DCPS parent. I'm the national coordinator of the Mooney Institute for Teacher and Union Leadership which works with unions and school districts on reform efforts across the country. Most important for today, I was president of the teachers' union in Montgomery County when we created a Professional Growth System – 1997 to 2003 – a collaborative effort between the union and the school system. Mr. Catania, I helped write the Montgomery contract that you seemed so impressed with at the December hearing on the Chancellor's 5-year plan.

I have 6 quick points.

First, what's been neglected in DCPS over many decades, is having a plan to focus on support for quality of teaching and learning. I'm not yet sure whether the current administration is more serious about that agenda.

Teaching is complex work, with a rich knowledge base and a broad repertoire of strategies that teachers must master. I provided each of you with the opening chapter of *The Skillful Teacher* because it demonstrates that teaching in fact is rocket science.

Second, Prince Georges and Montgomery Counties have invested significantly in improving teaching and learning. The most important effect of these combined efforts is not that test scores improve (which they will). Rather it is the message to teachers and principals of respect for the complexity of teaching.

The MCPS Professional Growth System includes:

- Training for teachers in what good teaching is and a language to talk about what they're doing and what they're struggling with.
- Training for principals and teacher leaders in how to observe and analyze teaching.
- Staff Development teachers at each school whose sole function is to organize professional learning and growth for teachers.
- Individual Professional Development Plans
- New teacher training and mentoring
- A Peer Assistance and Review program as the quality control mechanism, run by the teachers' union and the principals' union.

Prince Georges' created a \$2 Million program of support for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. They use Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching and the Institute for Learning's Principles of Learning.

This is what's missing in DCPS. I would worry about a reform effort in DCPS that cancels support for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards that was a cornerstone of Dr. Janey's reforms.

Third, there is a difference between improving "student achievement" as measured on annual tests, as important as those measures are, and building the "human capital" of quality teaching and learning. I can give you lots of examples of practices that are not educationally sound but get the scores up. So I urge the Council to resist the single minded focus on Performance Targets toward Adequate Yearly Progress on the single test, and to rather stay focused on the broader definitions of human capital and the quality of teaching and learning.

Fourth, turnover of staff works against the goal to build human capital. I'm concerned that some of the current strategies exacerbate teacher turnover. I've included in my written presentation a short summary of new research by Morgaen Donaldson on the national turnover rates for Teach For America recruits. I have the full research report if you'd like it.

Fifth, the Chancellor's 5-year plan seems to have the right goals. The test is whether the strategies will attract and retain great teachers. If I could oversimplify for effect: the Chancellor's Five Year Plan cleans house in the first year; provides professional development but most of it aimed at getting the scores up on the DC CAS. Training for administrators and a few teachers in what good teaching looks like happens in the second and third years – for teachers not really until 2010-11. Its good that Skillful Teacher and Skillful Leader training is in the plan, but the sequence should be reversed. The scale of the training in the craft of teaching seems too little, too late.

Sixth, building human capital, as Marc Fisher suggested, means working with your teaching work force. I would encourage the Council to set up focus groups of teachers and administrators to determine whether teaching and learning conditions are improving. Ask for turnover rates. The witness list for

this hearing is a great start, because this afternoon, you will actually hear from teachers. What a novel idea.

In closing, I would like to thank you for initiating what I hope is a continuing focus on efforts to build and to nurture DCPS' workforce talent.

We started a blog, *Teachers and Parents for Real Education Reform @* blogspot .com. Kaya Henderson and Jason Kamras invited a few of us from that initiative to meet about these issues a few weeks ago. We look forward to more such conversations because we know getting the details right is not easy. We remain skeptical that plans to build human capital in DCPS are adequate to the task. Teachers and principals have been let down by the system for too many years. Major investment is needed to support instruction.

We can't go fishing for great teachers. You don't find them fresh out of college. As Jon Saphier says in the first chapter of his book, "good teachers are made, not born." That is the job of this school system.

I encourage the Council to ask tough questions about the details, and not be satisfied with broad overviews. It takes a lot of digging, Mary Levy reminds me, to decipher what the priorities are and whether, along the way, the conditions of teaching and learning are improving.

Appendices:

- A. Chapter One The Skillful Teacher
- B. External Evaluation of the Montgomery County Professional Growth System
- C. Peer Assistance and Review brochure by MCEA/MCPS
- D. Morgaen Donaldson research on Teach For America