

S.H.A.P.P.E. Newsletter

Senior High Alliance of Parents, Principals and Educators
A coalition of the District of Columbia Public Senior High Schools
Working together since February of 1998;

January –February 2010

Volume 9. Issue 1: Second Edition Abridged

Important Upcoming Dates:

Feb. 23rd – Mid point in the Advisory

Feb. 23rd – SHAPPE Meeting – 12th

Anniversary

March 1- Parent Teacher Conferences

March 9 Mayor’s Budget Hearing at Smothers

March 26th- Council Hearing on Healthy Schools Act; 11am Wilson Building

For more information about the Senior High Alliance of Parents, Principals and Educators (SHAPPE), please contact Cathy Reilly at 202-722-4462

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Newsletters may be viewed online at <http://shappe.org> – the new S.H.A.P.P.E. website

Mayor’s Budget Hearing

The Mayor’s Budget Hearing will be held on Tuesday, March 9th at 9:30am at Smothers Elementary School; 4400 Brooks Street, NE Washington DC.

The purpose of the hearing is to solicit the views of the public on levels of public funding to be sought in the FY 2011 operating budget for the public schools, pursuant to the District of Columbia Official Code § 38-917. Specifically, the Mayor wishes to receive testimony and exhibits regarding those subjects identified in DC Official Code § 38-917(4):

- The current and prospective educational needs of the pupils in the District of Columbia public schools, educational programs that can address these needs, and support systems needed for safety and efficiency;
- The relative levels of support provided in recent years and sought in the current budget requests for the District of Columbia public schools and other agencies of the District government that support youth;
- The programs and levels of funding supported by the findings of relevant professional studies and commissions; and
- The levels of funding for public school systems in surrounding jurisdictions that have reputations for providing high quality education to their students.

Members of the public are invited to testify. Testimony may be limited to three minutes per witness and five minutes per organization or group. **Those wishing to testify should contact Ahnna Smith in the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education via email at ahnna.smith@dc.gov or by telephone at (202) 724-0696 by 3 pm on Monday, March 8, 2010.** Witnesses should bring three (3) copies of their written testimony to the hearing.

Members of the public may submit written testimony which will be made part of the

official record. Copies of written statements should be submitted to Ahnna Smith, Special Assistant, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, 1350 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Room 303, Washington, DC 20004, no later than 3 **pm on Monday, March 8, 2010**. The official record of this hearing shall be transmitted to the Council of the District of Columbia at or before the hearing held by the Council pursuant to DC Official Code § 38-917(3).

If there are members of the public who need interpretation services, please contact **Ahnna Smith in the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education via email at ahnna.smith@dc.gov or by telephone at (202) 727-0696.**

Scholarship Information

Students and their families can access information about scholarships available to District students by using this website: <http://www.doublethenumbersdc.org/> Take the Right Steps > Find the Money on the left hand side of the screen > Scholarship Search 2) Next click on the upper right handed icon on the page that says "Register Here"then click "create an account" 3) Please fill out the information and click "register" 4) Next the screen will read "Thank you for registering"then click "Begin Voting"

High School Enrollment –

The projected enrollment numbers for next year are currently known by each school but are not publicly available. We have been told verbally that the projected enrollment at a number of the DC comprehensive high schools indicates a drop. For example using the 2009 equalized enrollment at Coolidge it is going from 607 this past fall to a projected 547; at Cardozo from 637 to 602; at Dunbar from 788 to 739. With the move to swing

space next year Wilson is projected to go from 1510 to 1458. Woodson at Fletcher Johnson is going from 481 to 441

We know that Eastern will be enrolling a 9th grade in the fall of 2011 for the first time in 3 years. The specialty high schools are either stable or increasing with the exception of McKinley which is projected to continue to operate below the 800 student capacity.

The enrollment projection for DCPS and the DC Charter Schools was done in conjunction with a third party this year as mandated by the DC City Council. It involved three steps.

1. The third party (Brookings, 21st Century School Fund and the Urban Institute used a formula based largely on history but taking into account other demographic factors to estimate the enrollment for each school.
2. These estimates were submitted to DCPS. DCPS adjusted these estimates in 2 ways. There was a program adjustment made to reflect things like the increased seats in pre- school, the opening of the 9th grade at Eastern etc. There were also technical adjustments. These are adjustments made for things the formula cannot take into consideration like the number of retentions. Both these adjustments made by DCPS were informed by the petition process from the schools.
3. The estimates by the third party are based on the reported enrollment. When the audited enrollment number is provided there will be a further adjustment.

The final enrollment projection will be submitted to the Council as one of the budget documents.

The high schools with declining enrollment were impacted by the Reduction In Force last fall and are again making substantial cuts to staff and program for next year's budget, these challenges make it hard to encourage new students to attend.

SHAPPE will advocate for the city to inform the investment in the high school buildings with planning in conjunction with the community. This planning will have to include a strong program and enrollment piece in order for our high schools to be the institutions that truly serve the city's adolescents.

Budget Process for FY2011

Average Costs Goes Up

While DCPS did work to keep the funds coming to the schools equal to last year the average costs per position did increase. This means that in addition to the cuts that have to be made for lower enrollment at many of the high schools, schools are absorbing the increases in the average cost per position. For example the cost of a teacher in last year's budget was \$81,185. The cost of a teacher in this year's budget is \$84,026. For a high school with 50 teachers this \$2,841.00 per position is a loss of \$142,050. For the larger schools the loss is thus amplified. There are increases in all positions except custodians who went from \$47,562 last year to \$43,015 this year and 12 month EG9 teachers who went from \$81,185 to \$76,993. A chart citing the differences is on the SHAPPE website under budget in the left hand column <http://shappe.org> This information is from the DCPS Budget Guide for 2009-2010 and The DCPS Budget Guide for 2010-2011.

DCPS Moving from 825 North Capital St. NW - The DC Department of Real Estate Services (DRES)

is moving both the headquarters of the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and the Department of the Environment (DDOE) to a new office building near the New York Avenue Metrorail Station.

The moves will reduce the amount of space the agencies occupy by at least 20 percent. DRES's newly implemented Workplace Design Guidelines were used to more efficiently use the space and standardize office furnishings.

Together, the District agencies will lease 200,000 square feet of office space at **1200 First Street NE** – about 121,000 square feet for DCPS and 79,000 square feet for DDOE.

This recent move is part of a larger strategy by the District to reduce the District's portfolio of leased space. In Fiscal Year 2010, the District will vacate approximately 170,000 square feet of leased space, resulting in millions of dollars in cost savings. Across fiscal years 2009, 2010 and 2011, the District will vacate more than 700,000 square feet of leased space. The agencies are scheduled to move into the new building at the end of February. *(story from the DC Government website)*

January SHAPPE Meeting Notes

Attendance from these schools: Coolidge, DC Hunger Solutions, DC PIRC, Dunbar, John Hopkins, Cardozo, Wilson, Roosevelt, Ballou, Ellington, STEP UP DC, CFES, Coolidge Alumni Association

There were many parents and teachers in attendance, a number of the teachers are also parents of children in the District of Columbia Public Schools. There were also a few organizations who work with our students and parents.

Kristin Roberts from DC Hunger Solutions gave a brief presentation and asked for feedback from those present on their school breakfast and lunch programs.

She noted that there is actually more money coming in to improve the food being served. Chartwells is renovating a number of the school kitchens.

Feedback for Kristin:

- Coolidge misses the sandwich bar which many staff and students formerly used
- The area where students get their food is so small that it is a challenge for them and many choose not to go through the lines.
- Roosevelt parent who dined with her son, tasted a cheese burger found it dry and would not recommend it; while students ate it she was disappointed.
- Cardozo teacher did a survey on what students liked and didn't like at school. Uniforms came in first in terms of things they did not like; second was the food. They said there is no variety, portions are too small and the logistics of getting the food too much of a challenge. Many students do not seem to eat breakfast or lunch.
- Roosevelt parent asked "if we are concerned about nutrition, we should have real food." Many present remember school lunches from their own school days. Food was prepared on site in the kitchen and included greens and a hot meal.
- Folks urged DC Hunger Solutions to visit the schools.
- Cardozo parent noted that Chartwell's manages the cafeteria where her son currently attends college. They have signs up noting a typical student choice and then another selection noting a more nutritious choice. She was impressed with the efforts to teach the student

when they selected their food about better nutrition. Since it is the same caterer couldn't they do some of that here?

In response to questions about what school might have a model Kristin said that she understood that Anacostia had resolved some of these issues.

Mary Cheh is sponsoring legislation on nutrition and health; they have had a good process of reviewing the legislation with a working group. The bill has all ready undergone a lot of changes. A parent still noted with concern that it did not appear that people who actually worked in a school were part of these discussions.

Margaret Angell, DCPS Director of Secondary School Transformation:

Ms Angell comes to DC from Boston where she worked for the Chief Operating Officer of the Boston Public Schools. She was in charge of initiating and implementing a program to include 4 years olds in the public schools there. While it seemed impossible at first, with solid planning and involvement from all sectors, it was successfully accomplished.

Her sense is that while transforming the high schools into places that better serve all of our students is daunting; the principle of involving all sectors and taking the time to get a quality plan with concrete steps to implement it is the same. (as the principles used in Boston)

The first step the Chancellor took was to consolidate the offices that work with secondary schools under the Office of Secondary School Transformation. This includes but may not be limited to Scheduling, College Readiness, Advanced

Placement/B, ROTC, Course Offerings and Academic Policy.

This will mean this office (Secondary School Transformation) is kind of flying the plane while transforming it –Ms Angell indicated they are up for the challenge.

She started by forming an internal steering committee which has been brainstorming the best process to transform the secondary schools – this planning will take place over the next 9 months.

Ms Angell stated that these questions are an integral part of the framework for this process:

What do we want; vision, expectations?

Where are we now?

What models here in DC or across the country have achieved success?

While DCPS has compiled an internal list they will be taking out, Ms Angell came to this meeting to listen first, to learn from the parents and teachers present what has worked and not worked so far. The Office of Secondary Transformation would also like to hear about planning processes, what has worked, and what are the best ways to include parents?

Questions and comments

Parent asked about vocational education or the opportunity for students to learn about work, to have more career prep. While Ms. Angell prefers the broader term of career education since the use of vocational education may preclude college or post secondary programs – she totally sees internships and CTE courses as part of the task. Some post secondary education or training is necessary now for just about every career including many construction and trade jobs. Another parent who works in cosmetology commented on the value and

importance of being able to do work in this field, it may mean you can have a job at any time – it is also a source of enjoyment.

Parents value their children knowing how to sew and how to fix and build things. They would like to see a return to these being offered as electives in the high schools.

The following comments are not a reflection of what exists or doesn't exist at every school. They are suggestions and statements of what is needed. Some of these programs etc. are operating at some schools in varying degrees.

- Stability helps schools be more successful,
- Systems being in place that support good nutrition and health matter. We would like to see more wrap around services in the schools.
- Parent Involvement Matters;
- Strong curriculum like what is being offered at Banneker
- Baselines that set a high standard - The Office of Secondary School Transformation will establish a baseline in order to understand what is being changed. What will it be? Will it include how many National Merit Scholars DCPS has, what will the definition of education be – if this is ambiguous it will be hard to communicate and inspire.
- Leadership that does not just hold folks accountable but actually sees the issues on a day to day basis - Those present urged the new Director to get out in the trenches, the children can't really wait for science labs and the support they need, they asked that she come to their schools and get a sense of what is happening.
- Preparing elementary and middle school students - The students are not prepared when they come to high school. The elementary and middle schools need the

support to ensure that students come better equipped to handle the work, the high schools do not now offer what is needed to catch students up, sometimes the gap is quite large.

- Connecting children to their culture - Education has failed to connect children to their culture. This parent comes from both an American Indian (Cherokee Nation) and Black American background. Unless our students really understand who they are, have a feeling for their culture it can get in their way. They may not feel worthy of being respected, hundreds of years of oppression have taken a huge toll.
- Bringing all entities together will make a big difference – Alumni groups, outside non-profits, and parents. We need to marry up the support groups. (*This was effective in Massachusetts and Ms Angell looks forward to working this way here.*)
- An individual learning plan for each student; 70% of the students are below grade level, they are barely able to go to community college.
- Budgets in the comprehensive high schools that support the work they are being asked to do: As schools prepare to cut their budgets- these students need more; not less.
- Perhaps an IEP for every student could be considered-Should we be replicating what we do for special education students? Should there be smaller classes, wider use of the universal design for learning?
- The four by four schedule is not working in many schools
- Consideration of what might work best for students transitioning is needed- We have students transitioning from DC Jail and the Youth Services Administration; are they ready? Are the high schools an environment that can support them?

- Reconsidering the strong focus on 10th grade test scores could bring a better focus on education-The schools' focus on test scores has actually alienated the students – they are not connected to the tests. In addition it can appear that after 10th grade the school does not care about them the same way.
- Support of Black Males could be stronger across all schools.
- There is a *disconnect* in the atmosphere we are creating at our schools. They convey a lock down “sit down and shut up message. College and life after high school is actually the opposite, the students will be in situations where they will be making all those choices as adults. The high schools do not in fact treat them as young adults.
- The interdisciplinary approach at Deal a number of years ago allowed teachers to work closely together and reinforce many basic skills across different subject areas. It was very effective. English and social studies coordinated their teaching; music and math and science made sure they were collaborating where it was possible.
- Presence of Supports: Wilson has after school learning labs in Math, Literacy and World Languages. Every school should offer students the opportunity to get this kind of extra help.

Planning:

Make sure there is a robust and inclusive planning process at the local school and that the local school parents, teachers, administrators and students are involved from the very beginning.

Tony Williams had meetings in different parts of town where people sitting at tables were able to talk about what they wanted for their neighborhoods. This was very effective in getting input from different sectors and

also focusing on local concerns not citywide issues.

When the local school restructuring teams have been well supported they have been effective at planning. When all members are informed at the same time and treated as a team it does involve all sectors of a community.

The writing of the school plans this year was done quickly. It did not have the kind of deliberate and reflective process people would like to see.

Final comments: What next? There was genuine appreciation for the spirit of reaching out and getting input by the Office of Secondary School Transformation. There was concern for the children currently in the schools. Because we have had a number of meetings over the last few years on variations of this topic, there was some frustration. There is hope that we could begin to see the compilation of these ideas and a way to move forward informed.

Ms Angell said she would be willing to come to the SHAPPE Meetings to continue talking about long term planning, though she would have to check her schedule. SHAPPE offered to put this on the agenda of every meeting. We meet the fourth Tuesday of every month. Our next meeting will be February 23rd.

Principals were just getting final budgets so most people in attendance did not have information on their school budgets. We will have a policy discussion at a future meeting on what questions might be asked before opening a new high school or moving a high school permanently to a new location. While the issue with Ellington that came up in the last few weeks has been resolved for the present, folks did want to know what the

process would be should this or something similar be considered in the future.