

Dear Education Committee Chairman Catania, Members of the Education Committee
Cc: Chairman Mendelson, Council Members

From: Erich Martel, Retired DCPS high school teacher ehmartel@starpower.net
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SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR MEMBERS OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE TO ASK DCPS CHANCELLOR HENDERSON

DCPS Chancellor Henderson is coming before you in a hearing on the subject of schools that she intends to close.

It is time for the Council, both the new Education Committee and the Committee of the Whole, to bring a halt to piece by piece dismantling of the DC Public Schools by its own leadership.

I am requesting that you place Chancellor Henderson under oath.

Please address the following topics to the chancellor (specific questions are in the attached word document):

- A. The Roles of ER Strategies and the DC Public Education Fund and why their contracts and roles were kept secret from the public**
- B. The \$64.5 million 3-year (2009-10 to 2011-12) grant to DCPS, also facilitated by the DC Public Education Fund & the continuation of the funding despite DCPS's failure to fulfill the student achievement terms of the contract: "Predicted Gains [in student achievement]"**
- C. Closure of 16 DCPS schools** (Malcolm X ES is included, because the destructive effects of transferring a school to a charter operator are the equivalent of closing it)
- D. Transfer of Malcolm X ES to a charter operator – reportedly, Achievement Prep Charter School**
The attached spreadsheet displays the following data re Malcolm X ES and Achievement Prep PCS

- A. The Roles of ER Strategies and the DC Public Education Fund and why their contracts and roles were kept secret from the public** (This will be an indicator of how serious the members of the Council Education Committee take their oversight responsibility)

QUESTIONS:

Was it a contract paid by DCPS or other DC Government entity or, like the IFF Report, "commissioned" by a DC Government official and funded by a private, special interest?

Why was this "study" kept secret from the council and the community. The ER Strategies website states that the "partnership" with DCPS began in 2011

What did the **ER Strategies** produce (as in "deliverables") for DCPS or any other DC Agency or contractor or agent seeking to influence any aspect of DCPS operations and educational mission?

Who in DCPS was responsible for supervising the contract?

When did the contract start and end?

- B. The \$64.5 million 3-year (2009-10 to 2011-12) grant to DCPS, facilitated by the DC Public Education Fund executive director Cate Swinburn, & the continuation of the funding despite DCPS's failure to fulfill the student achievement terms of the contract: "Predicted Gains [in student achievement]" (**

The DC Public Education Fund arranged for four foundations (Arnold, Walton, Broad, Robertson) to fund the \$64.5 million grant to DCPS to influence the contract with the WTU: Teacher Salary increases (moved to the appropriated budget by the CFO); Teacher Excessing & Teacher Bonuses. In return, Rhee promised (with implicit agreement from Henderson) three years of “predicted gains” in annual student achievement.

DCPS made 0 of 16 in 2010 and 2 out of 20 promised gains in 2011, but the foundations continued to fund the grants and Henderson continues to excess and terminate teachers and pay out bonus funds that have no correlation to student achievement.

DCPEF & four foundations letters & contract pledging \$64.5 million to DCPS for teacher salary increases, “performance-based excessing” and teacher bonuses (see p22 for Rhee’s promised “predicted gains” in student achievement):

<http://npe.educationnews.org/Review/Resources/DCPEFtoDCPS.pdf>

DC Public Schools Fail to Meet Performance Requirements of 4 Foundation Grants:

<http://www.npe.educationnews.org/Review/Resources/DCPSanalysis.htm>

QUESTIONS:

Why did you continue to accept funds, even though you failed to meet the “predicted gains” promised by Michelle Rhee and implicitly by you?

What instructional measures, supports, strategies, materials, etc. did you and Michelle Rhee implement in order to achieve the “predicted gains”?

To what causes do you attribute the failure of DCPS to meet the “predicted gains”? In your answer, please specify efforts that you and Michelle Rhee undertook at the sixteen (16) schools that you are planning to close.

Please provide the Council with copies of correspondence between DCPS officials and the DC PEF and the foundations.

C. Closure of 16 DCPS schools

For most engaged parents, a non-negotiable factor in choosing a school is the assurance that it is safe and orderly and that disorderly and violent students are immediately removed from the classroom. If that is not obvious in a school, they will seek alternatives.

QUESTIONS:

Each of the schools on the closing list has several years of low test scores.

What instructional support or measures did you undertake when you saw that test scores were low?

In several of the schools, the majority of the instructional staff was hired by you and Rhee: Davis, MacFarland, Ferebee-Hope and Malcolm X. You secured a contract with the WTU that gave you a free hand to place hires of your or principals’ choice in school vacancies.

Why did your and Rhee’s strategy fail to bring about the improvements needed that would have stopped the charter drain?

Why is the chancellor allowed to close schools, when her policies are responsible for parents moving to charters?

D. Malcolm X ES – and Achievement Prep Public Charter School

Please consult the attached spreadsheet, “Malcolm X ES”:

Sheet 1: Malcolm X's "Current" Staff (source: Public Body Information, 12/21/2011).

note: The PBI is supposed to be updated and posted quarterly. It has now been over 13 months!

Sheet 2: Malcolm X's Enrollment DC CAS History

Sheet 3: Achievement Prep Public Charter School's Enrollment and DC CAS History

The chancellor announced her intention of operating Malcolm X Elementary School in partnership with a "high performing charter school," which reportedly will be Achievement Prep Charter School.

This raises many questions about the chancellor's management of elementary schools. In addition, an examination of data from Malcolm X ES and from Achievement Prep raises questions, which **must** be answered before the chancellor is allowed to make any changes to its current status.

QUESTIONS Regarding Malcolm X ES:

1. Why has the enrollment of Malcolm X ES declined between SY2006-07 and SY2011-12?

Please answer this question by making reference to

- a. Management of building safety and student behavior
 - b. Reading programs employed at the school and the evidence of the program's effectiveness
 - c. Arithmetic or math programs employed and the evidence of their effectiveness
2. According to the December 21, 2011 Public Body Information document (the most recent available), seven elementary teachers, one instructional coach and one social worker were hired since you and Michelle Rhee became chancellor and deputy chancellor (June 13, 2007). In addition, the principal, assistant principal, academy coordinator, site coordinator and four aides were hired under your individual or joint chancellorship. Seven teachers and eight office and custodial staff were hired prior to your and Rhee's appointment. Thus, **18 of the 25 instructors and instructional team members were hired by you and Rhee or by you alone.**

Enrollment in Malcolm X ES:

During the period of your management, the enrollment of grades PK to 5 dropped from 339 in SY 2006-07 to 191 in SY2010-11, rebounded in SY2011-12 to 234 and this year fell slightly to 221.

Thus, under your watch, with a majority of the leadership, instructional and instructional support staff hired by you, enrollment has fallen.

3. DC CAS results showed the following patterns:
- a. Reading: Percentage proficient averaged 20% to 28% between 2005-06 and 2010-11
 - b. Math: Percentage proficient jumped from 11% in 2006-07 to 30% in 2008-09; then plummeted to 8.5% in 2009-10, then back up to 15.9% and last year to 18.5%

Please explain how these scores represent your instructional policies, your hiring policies, the support of the instructional superintendent in charge of Malcolm X ES.

4. Achievement Prep Charter School Raises Concerns: Drastic Enrollment Drops and Increases

The chancellor's plan to turn over Malcolm X ES to a charter provider, Achievement Prep, should not be approved. Please look at sheet #3: Achievement Prep PCS. Notice how the first two cohorts, color coded blue and green radically declined in number between grades 4 and 7 and 4 and 8. The

first (blue) cohort started with 22 students and ended with 11. The second (green) cohort started with 43, increased to 44, then dropped to 23. The next two cohorts show unusual increases and decreases.

In addition, Achievements grade 4 starting average score is unusually high, suggesting that the student enrolled had higher performance scores in grade 3.

The chancellor owes you and the residents of Washington, D.C. complete information and documents describing performance.