

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
HEARING ON PROPOSED RULES PERTAINING TO COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

FEBRUARY 20, 2013

TESTIMONY OF EMILY BRADLEY, INCOMING DIRECTOR OF CLASSICAL CONVERSATIONS IN DC

Thank you to the Board for the opportunity to provide this testimony. My name is Emily Bradley. I am in the Incoming Director of the Classical Conversations Community of Washington, DC. Classical Conversations communities exist all over the country. Their goal is to complement home-centered education by connecting like-minded families and providing quality educational materials. Our families attend a structured, academic session once a week where paid parent-tutors model the Classical method of learning and instruction for parents.

This year our community consists of 18 families with 33 students. Our families come from Wards 5, 6, 7 & 8. A few even travel into the city from Virginia and Maryland to participate in our outstanding program.

Before I begin my testimony on the content of the new rule, I will note that paragraph 2100.3(b) exempts law-abiding home schooled children and their parents from the attendance recordation requirement. However, the Rule adds them back in in paragraph 2101.1. It is difficult to understand whether the SBOE even intended to apply this new requirement to home schooling families. We hope and believe this Rule is not intended for home schoolers, but with an abundance of caution I offer these comments on behalf of myself and the families of Classical Conversations.

As I'm sure others will note, comprehensive home schooling regulations already exist. DCMR 5200 was developed in 2008 based on thousands of comments, emails and phone calls to the OSSE from the active DC home schooling community and others. Though this was before my time, I'm sure the comments I and others will make today echo those of the discussion five years ago. By including home-schooled instruction in this new regulation regarding attendance, the SBOE would be whittling away at a comprehensive law that is the hard-earned product of months of cooperation between the SBOE, OSSE and active home schooling parents in the District.

In addition to the fact that comprehensive regulations already exist, application of the new attendance requirement to home schooling families would be nonsensical. The new rule requires contemporaneous

recordation of attendance, but home schooling is not simply “doing school at home.” Our families believe that learning should not be confined to set days, times and locations. Rather, when home schooling parents are with their children, learning happens on a frequent, yet irregular basis. For example, last Saturday, my son watched cartoons in the morning then crawled into bed with me, where we read *James and the Giant Peach* for 45 minutes. We ate breakfast then cleaned up our home to prepare for guests, the whole time discussing the concept of hospitality. He learned many things that day that I consider vital to a well-rounded education, but this was certainly not a formal, 6-hour instructional day. In fact, he’s never had a *single* 6-hour instructional day. Yet, thanks innumerable one-on-one teaching moments with my husband and me, our five-year-old reads at a 3rd grade level.

While the families in our community differ as to specifics, all will attest that home schooling differs fundamentally from traditional schooling. Because home schooled instruction is a wholly different model of education, it should be struck from the proposed Rule.

Given the comprehensive nature of DCMR 5200 and the nonsensical nature of attendance recordation for home-schooling families, Classical Conversations and its families respectfully request that the Board remove “home-schooled instruction” from paragraph 2101.1 of the new Rule.

Thank you.