

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Office of the State Superintendent of Education



Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Oversight Hearing

Testimony of
Hanseul Kang
Acting State Superintendent

Before the

Committee on Education

Council of the District of Columbia

April 30, 2015
Room 500
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004



Good morning Chairman Grosso, members, and staff of the Committee on Education. My name is Hanseul Kang and I am the Acting State Superintendent at the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). I am pleased to testify before you today on Mayor Bowser's Fiscal Year 2016 Budget, entitled "Pathways to the Middle Class." As Mayor Bowser recently testified before the Council, each agency plays a critical part in ensuring that District residents in all eight Wards have the education, economic opportunity, public safety, neighborhoods, environment, and infrastructure they need to reach the middle class. Mayor Bowser's Fiscal Year 2016 Budget submission will ensure that OSSE and the entire DC government have the necessary staff and resources to help meet these ambitious goals.

This budget is the product of an unprecedented amount of outreach. The Mayor held three budget engagement forums that were attended by hundreds of residents that described how they would allocate an imaginary \$100 towards key issues facing the District. The Mayor's budget staff also met with Councilmembers and their staff to incorporate their priorities in the budget. Finally, the Mayor and her senior leadership met with numerous community groups as part of the development of this budget. All of this work on the front end gave us a much better budget as a result and we will continue that kind of outreach, transparency, and accountability—including these hearings led by the Council—to fine tune and implement the Fiscal Year 2016 budget.

Let me now briefly describe my plans for the agency in the coming fiscal year. As you know, OSSE is somewhat different from most other District agencies as we are responsible for four different budgets: 1) OSSE's budget as the State Education Agency; 2) Non-Public Tuition Payments; 3) Special Education Transportation; and 4) Public Charter School Payments.

The agency's local budget breakdown includes:

State Education Agency (SEA):	\$131.96M
Non-Public Tuition:	\$74.41M
Student Transportation:	\$93.81M
Public Charter School Payments:	\$682.67M

The proposed FY16 budget will allow OSSE to continue its core functions, as well as provide us with the resources needed to continue improving our operations, toward the ultimate goal of increasing educational outcomes for our students and residents. In the coming year, the agency will focus on improving efficiency, maximizing resources, and improving quality and service delivery to our local education agencies (LEAs), community-based organizations (CBOs), educational stakeholders and partners, and the District's students and residents.

OSSE's proposed budget for FY16 includes an enhancement of \$200,000 to fund an additional community schools site, thereby expanding the comprehensive services model used in this program to more students in the District. We know that a child's ability to learn is often



influenced by factors outside of the classroom and believe that this expansion of the Community Schools initiative and its holistic approach will help schools address such issues.

In addition, OSSE is specifically committed to continuing the operation of the Statewide Longitudinal Education Data system, or SLED. Although the original federal grant to build the system will end during FY16 and there is not a specific enhancement dedicated to SLED, we are confident that we will be able to continue the system within our operating budget. As you know, SLED collects data needed for better planning, trend analysis, performance projections, program evaluation, stakeholder empowerment, and data quality improvement. It has become a foundational part of the work by OSSE and other agencies in not only collecting and disseminating data, but also in ensuring that our students are connected to the right resources and supports they need to succeed. We are firmly committed to ensuring that this work continues. Moreover, we are committed to continued transparency about the progress and growth being made in the educational sphere within the District and know that SLED is vital to that commitment. As much of the funds needed to operate SLED are personnel-related, we believe that through increased efficiency and careful prioritization, we will be able to identify the funds internally that are needed to continue the operation of the data system.

Beyond SLED, we also acknowledge that additional steps must be taken to improve the quality and consistency of OSSE's core functions. Over the past month in my tenure as Acting State Superintendent, I have met with multiple stakeholders in the District and have consistently heard that stakeholders want and need OSSE to be an effective state education agency that plays an important role in improving education in the District. I believe our FY16 budget will allow us to focus on improving the quality and consistency of our core operations, particularly as we are building upon some key groundwork that has been started during the current fiscal year. I would like to take a few minutes to highlight a few of these promising examples.

Quality Improvement Network

During FY15, OSSE received a multi-year, multi-million dollar federal grant to create an early learning quality improvement network, or QIN. The QIN is comprised of three hubs, which already provide excellent, high-quality services to some of the District's youngest residents and their families, and other childcare centers and homes that will receive technical assistance, coaching, and resources from the hubs to increase the quality of care they provide and better align with federal Early Head Start standards. This network allows the District to ensure a strong birth to five continuum and to ensure that our children are ready for school when they enter the K-12 system. Additionally, the QIN provides comprehensive services, including medical, mental health, wellness and nutrition, and family engagement support services, to the children and their families who attend one of the participating centers or homes. Further, the QIN allows for a continuum of care model, ensuring that our most vulnerable children will continue to



receive high-quality care, regardless of their parent's or caregiver's employment status. OSSE's goal over the next few years is to use the QIN to work with the District's childcare providers to improve the quality of care and early learning, while also learning from its work to help us bring best practices and an increased focus on quality to additional sites over time.

ReEngagement Center

OSSE is also committed to improving the services we provide to our disengaged youth, between the ages of 16 and 24. At the beginning of FY15, OSSE, in partnership with the Deputy Mayor of Education and the Department of Employment Services, launched the ReEngagement Center, or REC. Since its opening, REC staff have aggressively worked to contact youth known to have disengaged from school. Aligned with the practices of other reengagement centers around the country, the REC is targeting its outreach efforts throughout FY15 and into FY16 on students who have most recently disengaged. For example, of the initial 7,500 disengaged youth that OSSE identified, approximately 1,270 youth disengaged in the most recent school year. The REC has also worked to establish referral partnerships with numerous government agencies and community-based organizations that work with disengaged youth. For example, the REC has presented at every Metropolitan Police District roll call in the city and has trained frontline staff from partner agencies and organizations, including Child and Family Services Agency, Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services, and the Department of Human Services. Furthermore, the REC has just recently begun offering co-located intake at the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency, and will be looking to replicate this de-centralized intake model in the coming weeks at the Virginia Williams Family Resource Center and with programmatic partners located in Wards 1 and 4, which have higher concentrations of Latino youth. Additionally, in FY16, the REC plans to launch a virtual outreach program, modeled after a program in Colorado, in order to reach more disengaged youth and better equip partners with the relevant information about educational options needed to better serve disengaged youth that they are already working with.

As of April 23, 2015, the REC has served 178 youth; of these, 117 have completed the full intake process, and 67 students have been successfully placed in an educational setting. OSSE's goal is to fully re-enroll at least 200 students in an educational setting by the end of FY15 and at least 250 in FY16. This goal is consistent with other re-engagement centers around the country and is premised on the idea of intensive case management to address the root causes that led students to disengage in the first place. The REC staff work to provide intensive wrap-around services leading up to placement in an educational setting and throughout the first year they are enrolled. These wrap-around services include helping students obtain any public benefits they are eligible for, connecting the student to mental health services, substance abuse treatment, child care services, transportation, and/or employment options that fit within their educational schedule, and guiding students in their academic assessments and educational placements. Our approach is



premised on focusing on very strong implementation by addressing students' needs in a deep and comprehensive way while measuring outcomes around persistence and diploma/credential completion rate. At the same time, we also want to ensure we are applying our learnings about what it takes to help students re-enroll, persist and succeed, and develop a strong plan for how to grow our capacity and scale up our approach over time to more broadly address the challenges of disengaged youth in the District. This planning process to ensure that we can learn from our first year of work and grow our capacity to serve students will be a key focus in FY16.

Non-Public Tuition

The Non-Public Tuition program, administered by OSSE, provides funding, oversight, and leadership for required special education and related services for children with disabilities with high needs, in nonpublic settings, and in surrounding counties. Currently, 1014 DC students with Individualized Education Programs (IEP) are placed in non-public programs. Based on a review of current data trends, we expect that number to stay constant. As such, our proposed FY16 budget for non-public tuition is relatively constant at \$74 million.

OSSE's Placement and Oversight Unit provides guidance and support to LEAs in understanding their roles and responsibilities when considering a change in placement to a more restrictive environment. This work has continued to aid in diverting inappropriate educational placements and ensure that the children who need the highly specialized services that these programs provide receive them. We remain committed to working with LEAs to improve the quality of the educational they provide to all of our students in the District and expect that we will not only sustain the progress we have made over the last three years but be able to continue to build capacity and program quality for students with disabilities in our public schools.

Student Transportation

The mission of the Office of the State Superintendent (OSSE), Division of Student Transportation (DOT) is to provide safe, reliable and efficient transportation services that positively support learning opportunities for eligible students with disabilities who are residents of the District of Columbia. Currently, OSSE-DOT serves over 3,300 students, in 225 schools utilizing approximately 732 vehicles that travel a cumulative 31,000 miles per day along 557 routes. Additionally, we provide transportation services in the form of metro fare cards (for eligible students) and parent reimbursement.

During this school year, OSSE-DOT has continued maintain and exceed the Key Performance Indicator of On-Time Arrival to School. OSSE-DOT has a 96.3% success rate of delivering student riders to student before the bell rings for SY 2014-2015. To continuously improve our performance, we have begun to track on-time arrival in the morning and to homes after school. Although, these are not common metrics in the student transportation industry, we know both pieces of information will better inform our work and ensure that we are providing the best



service possible to District students and their families. Additionally, we implemented a new Parent Notification System (PNS) this year, with mass notification service provider Blackboard Connect, as part of OSSE DOT's push to enhance its parent outreach and engagement. Now, with the push of a button, the Division can notify the parents and guardians of the students who use student transportation in DC in a matter of minutes through automated voice and text messages. We look forward to maintaining this focus on quality service and strong communication and outreach in FY16.

Our proposed FY16 budget for student transportation is \$97.3 million, which is a decrease of \$1.3 million (1.3%) decrease from FY15. The decrease is primarily the result of a decrease in the number of vacant positions and several non-personnel line items.

In response to the Mayor's budget request, OSSE-DOT did a critical review of each line item to determine what, if any, reductions could be made without having a negative impact on the ability to provide mandated transportation services to students with disabilities. The reduction of vacant positions, does not impact our ability to provide transportation services as we still maintained an active staff of 631 Drivers and 731 Bus Attendants as well as 19 vacant positions to staff additional Bus Drivers. The staffing of additional drivers will ensure that we have a sufficient bench to cover daily (scheduled/unscheduled) and long term leaves.

Lastly, in reviewing our non-personnel budget, a reassessment by the Department of General Services of leased facility costs, occupancy and security resulted in a reduction of \$1.5M and a reassessment by the Office of the Chief Technology Officer resulted in a reduction of \$213,000.

The OSSE-DOT budget as proposed will allow for continuing operations as well as opportunities to expand our outreach to parents, training for staff and efficiencies in our overall operation.

Conclusion

The resources allocated to the agency in the Mayor's proposed Fiscal Year 2016 budget will be critical in achieving our mission and helping to grow and preserve the middle class. The Council and this Committee, led by you Chairman Grosso, have been key allies in this effort and I appreciate your continued efforts to ensure we operate efficiently and effectively.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I look forward to answering any questions the Committee may have.

