



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

**EDUCATION**

Dear DC community,

I am writing with an update about next steps for students and families at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts who received a finding of non-residency in May 2018. Today, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) is sending a new letter to families, outlining the opportunity for administrative review and sharing more information about the details of their cases as well as options to provide further documentation. OSSE will also be emailing the letters to families and will follow up with phone calls to ensure that families are aware.

Throughout this entire process, the top priority for OSSE has always been to ensure that public schools in the District of Columbia remain accessible to DC students and families.

That said, OSSE has listened to both public commentary and recent judicial recommendations and understands that families need more clarity about their particular residency cases, the process for resolution, and how they can provide additional information to OSSE. We understand that previous efforts at following our formal process have been confusing and not as clear for families and the community as we would like them to be, and we regret this. Our commitment is to work with families to resolve cases expediently. We will do this through communication with families, mediation, or through formal hearings if no agreement can be reached before then.

We also know that there are some families, both at Ellington and across the District, for whom providing the required documentation can be challenging – for example, families experiencing homelessness or with complicated home or family situations. OSSE will continue to work with these families and their schools to make sure everyone has a fair opportunity to demonstrate residency.

As we take the next steps with Ellington families, I want to remind people why we believe residency verification is so important. Our improving and growing school system is one thing that makes us proud to be District residents. However, in many schools across the District, spaces are already limited. For these reasons, our rules spell out that District residents have the first right to attend District schools. If there is space still remaining, then non-resident families can attend if they pay tuition. On behalf of District families, OSSE will continue to focus on keeping our schools open and accessible to DC residents first and foremost.

As we continue to oversee residency verification, we also want to ensure that we maintain a process that is fair and clear for families, that DC residents enrolled at Ellington have a chance to demonstrate their residency, and that non-residents who enroll are paying tuition. Our resources remain dedicated to bringing all cases to closure efficiently and fairly, and we look forward to helping families move forward.

Best,  
Hanseul Kang  
DC State Superintendent of Education