

Simone Scott
Committee of the Whole
Academic Achievement in the District
Wednesday, December 6th 2023

Good afternoon Chairman Mendelson, members of the Committee of the Whole, and DC Council staff.

My name is Simone Scott. I am a Ward 7 and Citywide parent leader with PAVE, and I have two children thriving at two East of the River Public Charter Schools - I Dream and Digital Pioneers Academy (DPA).

As a Parent Board Member of DPA we have recently introduced Python time where our scholars are able to use their Wednesday's after school to co-creating their own model of OST programming. Allowing students to learn together and gain life skills with continuing education electives not offered during the school day. With our city in a state of emergency with the increase of juvenile offenses this is not enough.

There are three types of students, those who want to work, those who want to employ, and those who are off track and simply aren't interested. With recent data our students are retaining information to graduate but they aren't thriving. For many of the scholars who do attend school do so simply because they're supposed to. So how can we increase students who aren't interested in school to graduate with their diplomas? Further, keep the scholars who are on track interested to stay?

I read a news story this week where a student in McLean, Virginia works 40 hrs a week working 2 jobs after school from 4pm-4am to save his family from homelessness. It was only after his peers and staff learning of his sacrifices were able to raise donations to help this scholar save his home and increase his opportunity to graduate this Spring. Attending the My Brother's Keeper event this week at MLK Library I also gained the opportunity to privately hear from our black and brown young men students who relate with similar stories who have the responsibility to secretly save themselves and their families in this regard. With many of our scholars facing homelessness, drugs, violence, and suicides due to the growing pressures to be adults while being children. What are we doing to save our students by creating a true career readiness



model that pairs their academic achievements with true capital earning potential which allows them to earn money while they learn?

When we talk about the achievement gaps of our most misrepresented and underserved scholars what are we doing to combat the disparities that increase their chances to fail school, not graduate, or show up at all? Furthermore, I believe it is critical for our students to learn peer to peer de-escalation skills to become models and mentors for themselves to rebuild their community they need for themselves.

What are we doing to truly hear, listen, and create environments where our student bodies develop true enrichment? Where do they design a community that supports academic curriculum, true career readiness, and each other? How can we engage students and ask them what THEY truly need to gain a different result than the current state? I believe If we give them a space they create with the incentives that matter to them they will gain more respect for themselves, their communities, their education, and career decisions.

What are we doing to really innovate what career readiness is? And how can we pair their goals, dreams, and interests with their academics so that we can help them choose and succeed to be prepared for life with the challenges threatening their choice for school, college, work, and/or career?

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Simone Scott
Ward 7 and Citywide PAVE PLE Board Member