



## PAVE Parent Leaders' Statement of Beliefs on Specialized School Programs

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## WHO WE ARE

### Our Mission

PAVE connects, informs, and empowers parent leaders to give families in DC a voice and choice in the vision for education in our city.

### Our Vision

Parents are partners and leaders with schools and policymakers to develop a diversity of safe, nurturing, and great schools for every child in every ward and community.



### Our History

PAVE was founded in April 2016 because we believe that for too long, parents have been informed of our education policy decisions after they have already been made instead of being invited to the table to create them. Since 2016, PAVE has grown into a network of 6,000+ DC parents and caregivers united behind a vision for an education system that is created not just for, but by and with families and guided by the following core values:

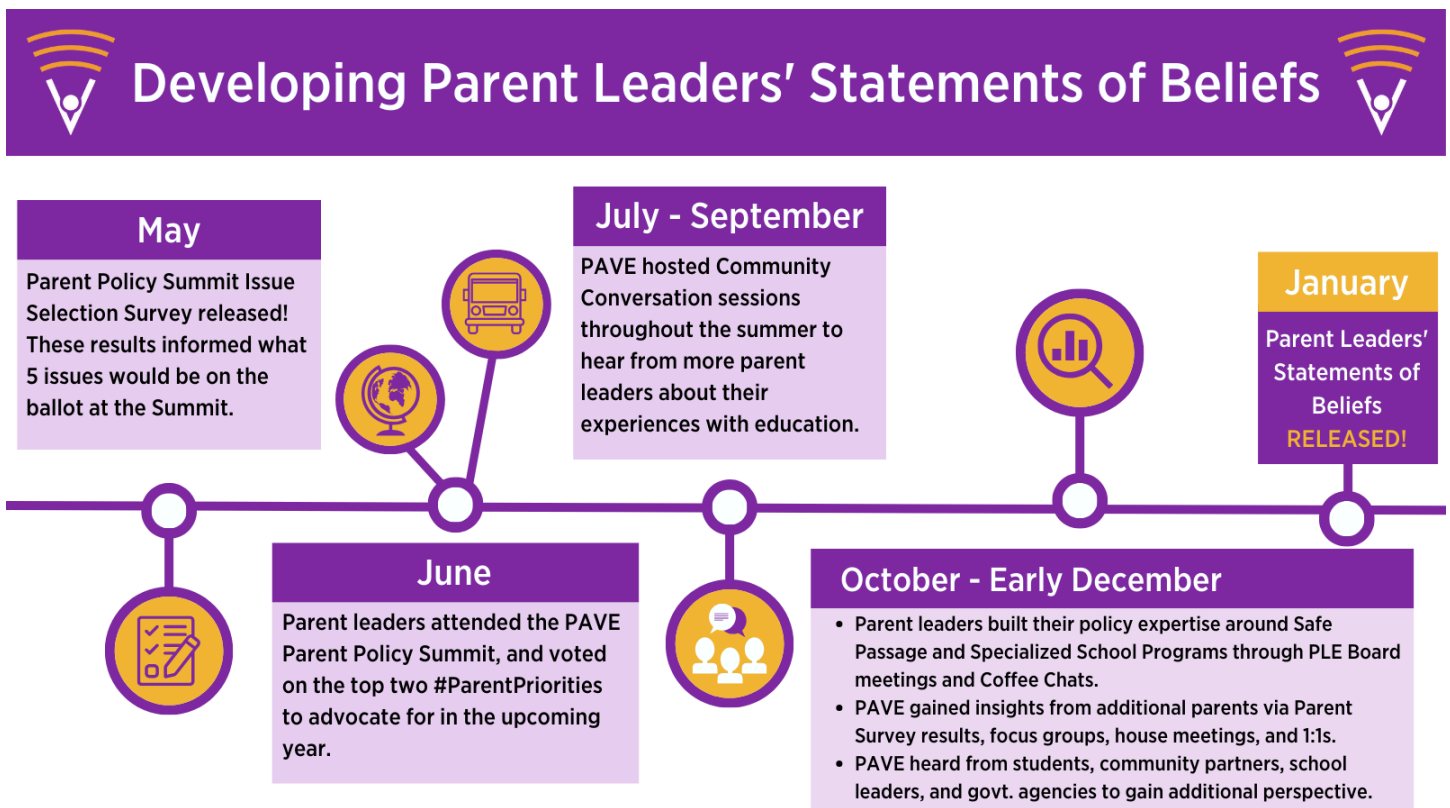
- Value #1: All families have access to high-quality schools and the information they need to make the best decisions for their children.
- Value #2: All schools have adequate and equitable funding to support the needs of children and families.
- Value #3: All students have a safe, healthy, and welcoming school environment.
- Value #4: All students have access to out-of-school time and summer school programs that allow them to foster their passions and enrich their learning.
- Value #5: All parents have the resources they need to support the success of their children at home and in school.

You can find more about PAVE parent leaders and their incredible work and accomplishments [here](#) and in their [Parents' Bill of Rights for the DC Education System](#).

## Our Why

*PAVE parent leaders developed and wrote their Statements of Beliefs to pursue educational equity and improved outcomes for kids and families across all Wards and communities in the District. We want to achieve this by encouraging and empowering caregivers to use their voice, providing accessible and inclusive information about issues they care about most, collectively creating policy solutions, and holding the system accountable to deliver on those solutions - together.*

## Our Process



## Choosing Our Issues

Out-of-School Time (OST) programs and School-based Mental Health (SBMH) have been the focus of PAVE parent leaders' advocacy over the past seven years, being voted as their top policy priorities at five Parent Policy Summits. In 2023, PAVE's Citywide Parent Leader in Education (PLE) Board voted to make those issues "anchor issues", meaning they will continue to build on the success they made possible with the relationships and expertise they built over time. They wanted to select new issues at the fifth PAVE Parent Policy Summit, and because everything PAVE does is driven by parents, we took to the broader parent community in the District to identify the most important new policy priorities and create PAVE's policy and advocacy agenda for the new year.

In May, **251 parents and caregivers** completed our citywide [Parent Policy Summit Issue Survey](#) to determine the top 5 policy issue areas to be on the ballot at the fifth PAVE Parent Policy Summit in June. **Eighty-five parent leaders** participated in discussions about their experiences, shared their personal stories about the issues, and voted on the policy priorities they identified as most critical to their children's education. **At the summit, parents selected this year's #ParentPriorities: Safe Passage and Specialized School Programs (SSP).**

**The Bottom Line:** DC's youth are in crisis. Since the pandemic, chronic absenteeism, missing 10% or more of school, has been rising and youth violence is more **predominant** than **ever** before. We need to get children back into the classroom and **engaged** with their own education. Based on data from schools and policy partners and their own experiences, PAVE parent leaders know Safe Passage and Specialized School Programs are two of the most important issues to get right and amplify to support our children getting back to school, excited about learning, and graduated.

## Identifying the Problem and Our Policy Solutions

### Identifying the Problem

Throughout a myriad of meetings in the fall, PAVE parent leaders shared their experiences - including bright spots and challenges - and vision for Specialized School Programs (SSP) in DC. We also heard from students, school leaders, national and community partners, and agency staff doing the work around the District.

*Here are the most common and pressing problems raised in these conversations:*

- Not all schools that **say they offer a specialized school program implement the programs with fidelity.**
- Not all **educators who teach in a specialized school program** are **familiar** with the program or **how to best teach their content area** within that model.
- The **school selection and enrollment process can be difficult to navigate** and it is not always easy to determine which school will best serve your child.
- Access to **quality seats in high-demand programs** isn't **equitable.**
- We do not have a **good way to measure if specialized school programs** are providing a **quality education.**

### Identifying Realistic Solutions in Partnership with Those Leading AND Doing the Work

We believe in finding the best solution for kids - and that only comes when you bring together people from **all** parts of the system with diverse perspectives to get the best ideas. **We are so grateful for the insight, expertise, and time of all of our parents and partners, and couldn't be more proud of the collective solutions we crafted together.** We look forward to working with the District's leaders and policymakers to bring about positive change for our children.

*Below are PAVE parent leaders' policy solutions:*

- **The Office of the State Superintendent (OSSE)** should develop a Specialized School Program (SSP) verification system in partnership with schools to build trust with families and ensure schools are implementing the SSP they claim to provide.

- **OSSE** should build out more robust voluntary continuous education credit programs/micro-credentials for educators in all SSP areas (dual-language, dual-enrollment, STEM/STEAM, Arts Integration, Career Technical Education (CTE), supporting students with disabilities within the specialized program, etc.) to build specific expertise.
- **OSSE** should provide grant funding for a school navigator program (~\$750,000) to help families with the highest needs (i.e families who qualify for the equitable access preference) identify the right fit for their child, understand the preferences they are eligible for in the My School DC lottery (i.e at-risk, sibling), and complete all enrollment processes.
- **The Office of the Deputy Mayor of Education (DME)** should restructure the 2024 Master Facilities Plan (MFP) to include a strategy across District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and public charter schools to increase seats and improve feeder patterns for high-demand SSP programs based on community input and with equity-centered focus (i.e. students with disabilities, geography, grade levels, demographics), on expanding programs (i.e. dual language, dual enrollment, arts integration, STEM/STEAM, CTE, etc).
- In partnership with the **Department of Employment Services (DOES), DCPS, OSSE, and the DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB)**, the **DME** should ensure the upcoming databases and performance management frameworks that include data about post-graduation outcomes are shared across agencies and include:
  - Post-graduation outcomes (college AND employment) by elementary and secondary program type that includes disaggregated data such as race, income, Ward of residence, students with disabilities, etc.
  - Run an analysis on student academic outcomes in specialized school programs and how they connect to post-graduation outcomes and share the results publicly.