

Sharnetta Boone-Ruffin
District of Columbia Public Charter School Board
ASPIRE Framework Public Comment
Monday, April 8th, 2024

Greetings Dr. Michelle Walker-Davis, PCSB board, and staff. My name is Sharnetta Boone-Ruffin. I am a Ward 8 resident, and I serve as a PAVE Citywide member. I am also a Dunbar High School-Engineering Academy and Eagle Academy Public Charter School parent, where I am also a parent Board of Trustees member at Eagle.

The newly proposed ASPIRE framework for DC charter schools has clear measurements and is overall a resource I can see myself using to check up on the things that are most important to me as it allows me to easily see how schools compare to one another. For starters, I like how the framework puts an emphasis on progress, achievement, and school environment. Those three metrics together will give parents and families a good idea on how a school fares in comparison to others. I especially like that there are absenteeism and truancy rates being included. As we all know, DC is having a hard time getting students to school regularly and on time and this is one way we can hold schools accountable for lowering rates of absenteeism and hopefully taking intervention seriously. Everyone, including charter schools, needs to be held accountable to make sure that kids are getting to and from school on time and doing what they need to do to learn. I also agree with holding schools harmless for the first year so they can think about and tighten up their systems and programs as I think this will be a critical time period for them.

I do think the current ASPIRE framework is missing some key items. Being an early childhood parent and an elementary school teacher in Maryland, I like knowing about teacher retention at schools and think this should be added to the ASPIRE framework beside the student re-enrollment rate under the school environment measure because teacher retention is also very telling. I had a child at one charter school, and I remember that there was something going on with the teacher turnover for the 2nd grade and only the 2nd grade which raised some questions. I liked knowing this information because it made a huge difference for my child and we made sure to build relationships with the 3rd grade teachers so she felt comfortable with them as she prepared to move to the next grade because these things really do make a difference. Understanding teacher retention and the metrics behind it is good information for us as parents and families. When schools are able to recruit and retain teachers, this is a good sign that the school may be the right fit for my kids.



Lastly, and this is something I testified on at the PCSB/SBOE/OSA Budget Oversight hearing last week, PCSB needs to find a way to include data about post-graduation outcomes for the high schools especially and share that data with parents and families. We deserve to know what percentage of kids did go to college and completed their first year after leaving one of DC public charter schools and what career they entered into. That's an important metric that is often forgotten. I hope that we can begin collecting this data so we know if children are even being successful on a large scale upon leaving the DC public education system. Again, families and students deserve to have this information when selecting their school. I believe ASPIRE should be piloted to get the kinks out. I believe this to be user friendly for parents who have a child in both public charter school and public school systems.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to future collaboration and am available for questions.

Sincerely,

Sharnetta Boone-Ruffin

Citywide and Ward 8 PLE Board Member, PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education)