

State of the Schools Address
Delivered by Dr. Clifford B. Janey, Superintendent
District of Columbia Public Schools

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OUR LEGACY, OUR PROGRESS, OUR FUTURE

OUR LEGACY

Thank you. Good evening and welcome --students, parents, teachers, principals, staff, members of the Board of Education and the DC Council, Mayor Williams and Mayor elect Fenty, partners and residents.

Tonight as I look out over this extraordinary audience, I am humbled and privileged to be a part of this school family and am proud to serve a community that is determined to restore the rich, cherished legacy of the District of Columbia Public Schools.

I would like to begin our talk this evening by taking a moment to brag a little about some who have “*done us proud*,” for they are the essence of our story. Past esteemed graduates of DCPS include our own Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, Duke Ellington, the first African American Space Shuttle Commander, Frederick Gregory, former Ambassador Joseph Huggins, Dr. Charles Drew, pioneer in blood transfusion, historian Carter G. Woodson, NFL players such as Cato June and Brian Leftwich, opera diva Denise Graves, comedian Dave (SH) Chapelle, the late basketball legend Red Auerbach, Marvin Gaye, and John Catoe, Jr., who will soon become widely recognized in this community as the new General Manager of the Metro System.

The young people throughout the auditorium and our student government leaders in these first rows, they also will enjoy similar accomplishments in future years. It is our responsibility to provide the opportunities and to prepare them –to do right by them, just as our parents, teachers and community did right by us.

One more comment about legacy and pride. On Thanksgiving Day, I was in the rain, on the sidelines, in the midst of one of the most thrilling football games I have ever witnessed. Ballou senior High School won the Turkey bowl for the first time, I am told in 23 years. But, on that day there were no losers. The Dunbar team played with the character and commitment to win so common to their legacy. As I was leaving, the Ballou students and fans were chanting, “We are back.” I’d like to think that we all are. Please salute both Ballou and Dunbar’s team coaches and captains who are in the audience this evening. (ask the audience to stand).

SETTING THE TONE

We are at an important and historic crossroad for public education in the District of Columbia.

The fact is that we have done some very good things in two years that have taken other jurisdictions twice as long.

The fact is that we have brought our school system into the 20th century, not the 21st century yet, in terms of technology by having all of our school offices connected to the internet and now 84% of our schools have access to the internet in every classroom.

The fact is that we have significantly improved the hiring of quality teachers and principals. More than 80% of our new teachers were hired by August 1, a 70% improvement from the fall of 2004, and we filled 80% of our principal vacancies by August 1, a 57% increase since 2004. We have increased the number of certified teachers from 45% to 80% in one year.

The fact is we have implemented new world class academic standards aligned with comprehensive assessments.

While these few examples are noteworthy and there are more, we can not advance the education reform agenda by either patching up the holes in a system with seemingly endless leaks or merely adding new programs to a foundation through whose cracks many have taken a fall. We can indeed finish what we have begun however, only by changing the system itself. Let's stay on this point for a moment. A system whether it is a business, a school district, or a city agency produces what it is designed to do and what it is capable of doing. If the system's foundation is shaky, we must lay a new foundation as a basis for creating a system that is innovative in purpose and responsive to the people.

To accomplish this goal we must come to grips with a few indisputable and hopefully uncomfortable facts.

First, until recently there has been an abdication of leadership responsibility for student achievement almost exclusively to the schools we now have.....

Second, until recently DC public schools did not hold itself accountable for the academic performance of students we now have.....

Third, until recently a high tolerance for low expectations has increased achievement gaps by lowering the threshold of academic rigor of our students we now have.....

Fourth, the absence of measurable performance goals for employees as well as community partners has affirmed the fallacy that the solution will only take a quick fix and DCPS is the responsible party.

And finally, there can be no greater sense of urgency to recapture the glory days of our past given the fact that more than half of all Black males for example who do not have a high school diploma have a prison record. While this is a national trend, we cannot ignore our own chilling realities in the District of Columbia that only 9% of our students graduate from college in five years.

OUR VALUES AND OUR VISION

Many of you recall that in January 2004, the Council of the Great City Schools, a coalition of the nation's largest urban school districts, had sent DC Public Schools a report outlining the deficiencies in our system which included a loss of singular focus on instruction, a lack of a coherent and common vision and a lack of measurable goals for academic improvement. The Council made nine recommendations to address our deficiencies. Well, I am pleased to report to you this evening that within two years eight out of the nine of these recommendations have been implemented and these deficiencies have been corrected and addressed. This is not a self serving rebuke of an uncomfortable reality. This is something the Council has acknowledged.

Our actions over the past 24 months have laid a foundation of success for the future. The progress started when we released the Declaration of Education in May 2005 we established three goals for public schools. First, every child has to have a world-class teacher, a good curriculum and instructional materials. Second, DCPS's has to modernize its business systems. Last, channels of communication had to be opened district-wide to spur parental/ family and community engagement.

Another important step occurred in February when DCPS released its Master Education Plan. This strategic plan was based on a survey of 15,000 parents. You told us what you wanted: 78.3% of you wanted more offerings in career and technical education, more than 90 percent of you informed us that putting libraries in public school buildings was a top priority and 88% of the parents surveyed wanted increased arts, music and physical education programs.

As a high school sprinter, I know first-hand that under certain conditions there is no substitute for speed. For example, this summer we right sized 6 schools and freed up nearly one million square feet. With a sense of urgency, we committed and executed the right sizing plan in less than 60 days after board approval, in the midst of preparing to open all of our schools on time. This was done with fleet feet.

While this was clearly an example of sprinting, modernizing and building new schools is much more like running a marathon. We are exploring ways to reduce the amount of time for modernizing from the projected 15 years down to 7 to 10 years.

As we sprinted to address the short term deficiencies of our system, we also need the discipline, the preparation, and the long-term strategic vision that is more appropriate to running a marathon. Like training for a marathon, turning our schools around will require that we build a strong foundation, develop an iron will, and maintain the confidence that working together we can achieve the required change.

OUR PROGRESS

INTRODUCTION

The progress we started at DCPS is real and tangible. Last August on the day that schools opened, I visited Mrs. Ernestine Lewis and her twin sons, Marquel and Marquis, at their home on Capitol Hill. I had the honor of walking with them to Tyler Elementary School that morning and meeting Principal Michelle Pierre-Farid at the door. We had breakfast in the cafeteria, where I heard Marquel and Marquis talk about their hopes for the new school year and their passion for learning.

Tyler is representative of the progress we have made over the last 24 months. Test scores at the school on reading proficiency have increased by more than 20 percent since 2005. Attendance has increased faster than any other school in the District over the last two years. Tyler represents the new diversification of DCPS and our city. Programs like our Spanish immersion classes for 3 year old students are attracting new parents.

Families are returning to Tyler and other neighborhood schools because the quality of instruction and the commitment to improve student learning has risen dramatically.

Tyler is not an isolated school. Thompson Elementary is focusing on Chinese Mandarin and increased its enrollment over the last year from 287 to 345, a 20% gain. Anne Beers Elementary School has the National Aeronautics Space Administration, part of our math and science initiative, effecting a number of schools east of the river.

Let me tell you tonight about the different facets of our school system where we have made progress.

TEACHERS and PRINCIPALS

Our teachers have entered the race to improve our school system with us. As an example, we moved quickly to expand the quality of the teaching corps at DCPS. We've joined with the College Board to train teachers, so more students will achieve higher scores on college placement exams and be college-prepared.

This year in partnership with the World Bank, the Cafritz and Kimsey Foundations, DCPS initiated an aggressive program to train 500 National Board Certified teachers within the next 5 years.

An important initiative in our new contract with the Washington Teachers Union focuses on tying compensation to performance. Another feature in the contract is that teachers are investing more time to improve the quality of learning.

We all know teachers can make an enormous difference in the lives of their students. We all remember a teacher who impacted our lives while we were in school. For me, that teacher's name was Ralph Di'Angelo. He was my 4th and 5th grade teacher at the Dearborn School. Mr. Di'Angelo later became a principal when I was a district

superintendent. I became his boss in effect. But that relationship, that bond we enjoyed remained constant over the years.

The new academic standards that we have put in place in our schools will not only require high-caliber teachers, but also strong, focused and effective school leaders. We have hired 85 new principals since I became superintendent, 33 new principals this year alone, eight of whom are former graduates of DCPS.

At our Principals' Leadership Institute our principals are strengthening their skills to lead and manage schools, help teachers succeed, close achievement gaps, and prepare themselves and their schools as the preferred choice of the community. Show me a good principal and I'll show you the makings of a good school.

PARENTS

Parents see education through the eyes of their children. They see the relevance of what we are doing in the school district at their child's school. They judge our success by what is going on in that school.

Over the years parents have been an untapped and under appreciated resource. This will no longer be the case at DCPS. We will be supportive of the multiple roles parents want to play throughout the system. We want parents to fulfill their roles as advocates for their children. We are going to be helpful in that regard by opening three new Parent Resource Centers in the coming months-one of these centers is scheduled to open in two weeks.

Finally, we expect and encourage parents to play an active role in their children's education, in and outside of the classroom.

COMMUNITY AND PARTNERSHIPS

We are redefining the idea of partnerships in public education at DCPS. As you all know, an urban public educational system faces challenges that most suburban schools districts do not face.

For too many of our youth violence has become an unacceptable reality in certain neighborhoods. We have had 16 lockdowns so far this year from violence which has occurred in our communities. This type of violence even outside our schools negatively affects our children's capacity to learn.

Our communities face higher rates of poverty and homelessness than other suburban communities.

That is why partnerships with the community are so critical. Our youth have a greater opportunity for success when all of the systems of support for our children are working in concert for them and their families.

An example of this type of partnership is the one we enjoy with the DC Education Compact where we have partnered on a teacher board certification initiative and the development of our parent centers. We want to thank Stacy Stewart, head of the Fannie

Mae Foundation, for investing the resources and convening the initial meetings that helped create the DCEC. This kind of civic commitment will reduce the likelihood that education for some will remain a spectator sport.

Another example of community engagement is The Capitol Hill Library Renovation project. This innovative community initiative is partnering with DCPS to provide additional funds and renovations for 8 schools libraries in the Capital Hill area. DCPS has added funds and resources to supplement their efforts. This partnership empowers the community to help strengthen the schools.

Toyota has contributed an additional \$1.3 million for us to make 1,000 books and learning materials available to 34 elementary school libraries in Southeast Washington. And also Toyota continues their innovative partnership with our automotive technology program at Ballou High School. More than 5,500 students participated in our career and technical academies last year, up from 3,500 students the previous year. That is not enough. I will not be satisfied until we reopen Phelps and transform MM Washington into a Hospitality High School with the assistance of our new partnership with the Marriot Corporation.

I want to acknowledge those who have led other innovative partnerships with DCPS such as Viki Bentencourt from The World Bank and underline our partnership with Greg Roberts and the DC Children and Youth Investment Trust and the Wallace Foundation for helping us build a new standard of quality for after school programs.

We want our students to be exposed at an early age to cultural diversity and international customs and languages. Let us not forget too that DC is a changing community. DCPS students and their families represent 135 nationalities and speak 121 different languages at home.

We have formed a partnership with the Chinese government, establishing programs in seven schools teaching the Mandarin Chinese language, three of the schools are located east of the river.

We have enjoyed a long term partnership with embassies here in the district. Here this evening we have with us leaders from China, Egypt, France and South Africa.

Our partnerships with government are critical as well. The US Department of Education has just awarded DCPS and with New Leaders for New Schools for their hard work and quality with a Federal Teacher Incentive Grant of \$14 million, the highest grant awarded to any school system in the nation. Through this grant we will identify and reward high-performing schools, principals, and teachers who will then share their best practices with other schools and classrooms.

NEW STANDARDS and ASSESSMENTS

In the past two years, I am proud to say that DCPS has established rigorous new standards and assessments - completing a process that has taken other school jurisdictions many more years. Here is an example of where we sprinted. This is an extraordinary accomplishment.

But the story gets even better. The prestigious Hoover Institution has ranked our standards the 4th best in the country.

We have 28 schools that made AYP. Our challenge now is to quickly provide the interventions that will enable the other schools to reach AYP.

We have already begun this work. Intensive reading and drop out intervention programs have been put in place to address these challenges.

It is important to recognize that the Executive Director of the Council of the Great City Schools, Michael Casserly, has pointed out that our test scores contain seeds of “**HOPE**” for the District. Consider the context: prior to 2004, tests were not rigorous enough, and it didn’t matter how many students scored at proficient levels. But now having raising the bar, our students who achieve proficiency will rank amongst the best in the country.

As a result of these changes and the higher standards, a DCPS diploma will be more valuable in the job market. Students will graduate prepared to have higher success rates in college and in the work place.

DCPS ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability must apply to all of us. It starts with me but it doesn’t end there.

We have put in place accountability measures that apply to school based staffs as well as central office staff. We recognize that we have to create a culture of competence which extends to all of our stake holders and advocates. We are working with vendors to make sure that they deliver quality goods and services in a timely fashion and that we get value for your tax dollars.

Working with the board we are steadfast in assuring the public that their tax dollars are wisely spent in the securing of and implementation of contracts. We are working towards a community of accountability.

Our Follett system, a computer based inventory system, has been installed recently and now tracks DCPS text books and library books with a bar code, so we know where our books are and how to plan for future inventory needs.

For the first time we have completed an inventory of text books in our warehouse. We have now bar coded over 231,000 text books and are well into the process of bar coding every text book in every school, having set a deadline for the end of this semester to complete this project.

FACILITIES

One of our objectives is to level the playing field for **all** our students. We cannot allow an achievement gap to exist in our system. This includes our facilities. We want to improve every school whether it is located East of the River or West of the Park.

In four months over the summer, DCPS renovated 48 out of 92 elementary school libraries. Next year we will renovate all our remaining libraries. We are dedicating \$12 million to make our library facilities, furniture, books and computers of the highest quality.

To level the playing field across the District, we are using \$2.3 billion in new funding from DC's City Council to build new schools and repair schools and buildings. Our Master Facilities Plan identifies schools in parts of the city with the greatest needs and supports transform of our high schools. We'll have new gymnasias, new science labs, new track and football fields, new reading clinics in our schools.

STUDENTS HEALTH

We know the importance of health in the lives of every child. In concert with the DC Health Department 98.8% of our children received their vaccinations shots. This according to the Health Department is the highest immunization rate of any urban school district in the country.

Immunization is only one part of the equation, more work needs to be done in terms of our children's total health.

OUR FUTURE, OUR CHALLENGES, OUR HOPE

A lot has been accomplished. While we have come far, much work remains. All of us must be committed to run this race together. I AM. I am in this fight for the long haul. I am dedicated to leading us through this challenging time and running with you.

Here are a number of challenges we face, chief among them are these big three:

First, the urgency to improve student achievement:

- Early entry into schools---Pre- K programs in every elementary school.
- Interventions with students falling behind academically, especially at the secondary level. (Recovery program, America's Choice, SpringBoard).
- As well focus on high performing students (AP, IB, Honors)

I am reaffirming this evening a system-wide reform agenda to improve our schools. Ten schools will be selected to participate in the innovation schools pilot program, which will allow school personnel a higher level of flexibility and autonomy in exchange for a greater degree of accountability. Ten schools will also be selected to participate in the

first ever successfully negotiated incentive pay program in the DC Public Schools. Teachers and administrators who participate in the program and achieve established target would receive additional compensation above their salaries. Five schools will also be recreated as year round schools.

Lastly, as we examine our progress towards meeting No Child Left Behind targets we know that even more dramatic changes are required in some of our lowest performing schools. I plan to select six schools for reconstitution in the 2006-07 school years, including three high schools, two middle/junior high schools and one elementary school. These schools will experience partial or full replacement of staffs, centralized or regionalized assistance from highly trained educators, increased professional development opportunities, reallocation of their school based budgets and, in many instances, supplemental funding.

Second, meeting the needs of our Special Education students:

- Nationally, and there is not evidence that DCPS is any better 70% of disabled adults are unemployed.
- Less than 5% of students identified for SPED ever re-enter general education programs. Implement the Consent Decree (first since 1997 lawsuit).
- DC students deserve the opportunity for a quality education in their home school. This reduces out of district placements and our costs which are consuming our budget.

Third, improving the efficiency of our business operations:

- We have implemented the Procurement Automated Support System (PASS) to provide for prompt and accurate procurement and accountability.
- It is critical that we overhaul the entire operations of human resources and payroll systems and explore options to use internal and/or external assistance.
- Align and strengthen the information systems for assessment, curricular, student and staff accountability.

As you look across the audience, you can see we are a mosaic of leaders and parents and educators and families. It would be too difficult to name all the individuals and organizations that have impacted our school system. Look around you though, and you can see that these individuals have the commitment and energy to meet all the challenges we face at DCPS.

These challenges require all of us to work together. We have laid out a clear educational strategic plan that is larger than anyone person.

What I have learned in two years is there is much resolve in this city. No matter where I go, whether in the far southeast or northwest, I hear the resolve from the parents and the school staff. I hear it from the alumni and community partners. If we work together, work through our differences and have a single focus on the future of our children, then we can accomplish much. We can build up this school system, restore our legacy and produce the next generation of Eleanor Holmes Nortons, and Joseph Huggins, and Duke Ellingtons.

Make no mistake about it. We are going to make history. And as I stated in the video, “Success is going to feel good. When we cross that finish line together, it’s going to feel real good.”

Thank you very much.