



Student Advisory Committee - 2017-18  
DC State Board of Education

**Overview**

In April 2017, the DC State Board of Education (SBOE) began to prepare for its third Student Advisory Committee (SAC), a committee initially convened at the suggestion of a District high school student in search of a way for DC Public Schools (DCPS) and public charter school (PCS) students to provide input on education in the city. SBOE chooses two Student Representatives to serve as unofficial Board members each year, and in addition to attending Board meetings, these Student Representatives sit on and chair the SAC. Previous committees, while productive, had been small, and SBOE sought to increase the representativeness, as well as the size, of its 2017-18 SAC. In pursuit of that goal, SBOE staff Paul Negrón and Maria Saliccioli set out on a tour of District high schools. Mr. Negrón and Ms. Saliccioli visited over 20 District high schools to drop off flyers alerting students of the opportunity to serve as Student Representative to the Board and to apply to the SAC. Applications were open to all sophomores, juniors, and seniors enrolled in DCPS or PCS. With the help of SBOE policy fellows Tara Adam and Amber Faith, Mr. Negrón also created a targeted campaign, emailing all District principals and advertising the SAC on social media.

The increased outreach worked, and SBOE received 26 applications for Student Representative, all of whom indicated that they were interested in serving as SAC members, regardless of whether they were also chosen to serve as Student Representative. Board members reviewed the applications and selected two high school students, junior Tatiana Robinson from Ballou High School and senior Tallya Rhodes from H.D. Woodson High School, to serve as Student Representatives. The other applicants were all invited to join the SAC, and most of them joined and became active members. These members also alerted their friends and classmates to the opportunity, and 25 District high school students attended meetings over the course of the school year. The names of the 2017-18 committee members are listed at the end of this report. The group of sophomores, juniors, and seniors represent 13 DCPS and PCS high schools in seven wards of the city. The graduating seniors will matriculate at colleges across the country this fall, and the sophomores and juniors will participate in a variety of local, national, and international educational and internship experiences over the summer.

At the SAC's first meeting, led by Ms. Rhodes and Ms. Robinson, committee members decided against choosing their own focus areas for the year, preferring instead to poll



District students to understand the issues that were most important to their peers. With the help of SBOE staff, SAC members created and disseminated a survey that asked District high school students to provide input on the most pressing issues facing DC students. The SAC received approximately 350 responses. The top issue areas were:

- Greater variety in school lunches
- Equal opportunities and resources for all schools
- College and career readiness
- Student engagement
- Increasing course offerings

Ms. Karen Williams, SBOE President, attended the next SAC meeting to help students understand which of these issues fell under the Board's purview and which would be difficult to act upon. Following the conversation with Ms. Williams, SAC members decided to focus on two priority areas: college and career readiness, and equal resources and opportunities for all schools. SAC members chose a committee to serve on, and each committee spent the remainder of the group's meetings focusing on projects that advanced their goals. Ms. Robinson served as the chair of the College and Career Readiness Committee, and Ms. Rhodes served as the chair of the Equal Opportunities for All Schools Committee.

In order to be responsive to the priority areas that were not addressed by the SAC, SBOE staff worked to provide students with additional outlets to contribute. Ms. Salciccioli, who served as the SBOE staff member who provided support to the SAC throughout the year, arranged for the SAC to meet with staff from the DC School Food Advisory Board and the Department of Parks and Recreation to provide input on school lunches and extracurricular activities. The SAC also met with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, and the outcomes of that meeting are detailed later in this report.

## **Accomplishments**

Over the course of nine meetings, the SAC made a series of contributions to the lives of District high school students.

### *Equal Resources and Opportunities for All Schools Committee*

The Equal Resources and Opportunities for All Schools Committee (EROAS) defined its mission as to:



- Create equal opportunities across all DC schools, both public and charter.
- Have a basis for students to strive in the best way they can.
- Advocate for the teaching of life readiness skills in DC Public and Charter Schools.

Group members were motivated by differences in schools' course offerings, extracurricular programming, and support from college counselors. After several meetings, group members realized that there were wide differences in the knowledge and support students received in their path to college and careers; for example, students in some high schools noted that they were inundated by visits from college admissions representatives, whereas those at other schools said they had not been exposed to many college representatives, and the opportunities were typically reserved for select groups of students rather than being advertised widely and made publicly available.

To counteract these disparities, the EROAS committee created a website, which can be found at [bit.ly/SBOESAC](http://bit.ly/SBOESAC). The website hosts a series of blog posts on how to apply for financial aid and fill out a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form, how to prepare for the SAT and ACT tests, and how to pursue scholarship opportunities. The website is a living resource, and SAC members hope it will continue to evolve with future iterations of the SAC.

### *College and Career Readiness Committee*

The College and Career Readiness Committee (CCR) focused on opportunities that would prepare District students for postsecondary opportunities. Their first initiative was to create a mentoring program, which had a soft launch in the 2017-18 school year. The mentoring program paired upperclassmen mentors with lowerclassmen and upperclassmen mentees. The purpose of the program was to help students make connections, both inside and outside of their schools, and to give students a knowledgeable source of information for any questions about academics, postsecondary options, or other matters. Members of the EROAS and CCR committees paired up mentor and mentee applicants, and the result was 10 pairs of mentors and mentees. SAC members helped train mentors, and students will have the option to keep their mentors/mentees or request a new pair for the 2018-19 school year, during which the SAC hopes to expand the program.

The CCR Committee also laid the groundwork for a wide-ranging career day. This career day, which will tentatively be held in October 2018, will bring career representatives from a variety of disciplines to meet with District students. SAC members have begun to identify careers they would like to learn about, potential locations, businesses that might supply



donated refreshments, and ways to advertise the career fair to students. SAC members see the career fair as an exciting way to kick off the 2018-19 school year with new committee members. Board members who have connections to various industries are strongly encouraged to support the career fair however they can.

### *SAC-wide Contributions*

The State Board convened its ESSA Task Force in August 2017; the representative group of education stakeholders is tasked with following up on the District's ESSA State Plan. The task force includes two SAC members, Daniel Rodriguez and Hannah Dunn. As part of its ESSA engagement, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) conducted a feedback session with SAC members. SBOE and OSSE helped create a new statewide report card in response to ESSA requirements, and DC engaged far more stakeholders than any other state did. In addition to gathering parent and community feedback, SBOE worked with OSSE to include student feedback by polling the SAC on what they would like to see on the new statewide report cards. SAC members gave important input that was reflected in the final report card content proposal.

### **Further Recommendations**

The SAC has recommendations for SBOE that go beyond the work they conducted over the course of the 2017-18 school year. First, the SAC members would like to call attention to those issues that their peers thought were worthy of attention that do not fall under SBOE's scope or could not be addressed by the SAC in their limited time together. SAC calls the Board to action on these issues and acts that they work on them or advocate for other agencies to address them. They are:

- **Ensuring that dual enrollment opportunities are available to all students who have fulfilled their requirements, advertise these opportunities to all students, and create standardized policies to facilitate dual enrollment across all District schools.** At some schools across the District, students have the opportunity to take a half-day from school and pursue coursework at a local college. At other schools, students are not given the flexibility to take these external college courses, even when the colleges grant them admission. Policies should be standardized across the District to ensure that dual enrollment opportunities are available to all students.



- **Encourage schools to offer free periods and/or study halls to students.** Students believe strongly that additional study time would help them succeed and pursue additional extracurricular and scholarship opportunities.
- **Ensure high-quality guidance counselor support across all schools.** Students reported discrepancies in their access to guidance counselors and the support they received from these counselors. SAC members felt strongly that there should be guidelines that guidance counselors should follow to ensure equitable support.
- **Provide students with time, support, and resources to find and complete scholarship opportunities.** Students reported that they needed scholarships to attend college but did not have time to apply for them. The SAC encourages SBOE to ask schools to find time to support scholarship applications.
- **Make sure that dress code policies do not unfairly target female students or students of color.** Students reported unequal enforcement of dress code guidelines for girls and students of color. This should not be tolerated.
- **Increase student and family access to personal, school-wide, and district-wide data.** Students felt that they did not have adequate access to their or their school's data, and without more complete data transparency, were not able to make easy comparisons between schools.
- **Encourage schools to create a required course, called Life Skills, that prepares students to fill out job applications, format professional resumes, succeed in interviews, plan healthy meals, dress professionally in office environments, and feel proficient in financial literacy (complete taxes, create budgets, open bank accounts).** SAC members agreed with the students who were polled in SBOE's High School Graduation Requirements Task Force focus groups; students are very interested in courses that teach them additional life skills. The SAC calls the SBOE to action on working with the city's LEAs to implement these much-needed courses.
- **Empower schools to offer professional certifications that can be pursued as electives, including an EMT course, computer training, and lifeguard training.** Students would like greater, and equitably distributed, opportunities to gain professional certifications through their schools.
- **Increase all students' access to college visits and college admissions officers; coordinate across campuses to ensure that college are visiting schools equally.** Students noted that some schools take students on college visits and garner significant attention from college representatives, whereas others do not. They ask that SBOE shed light on this unequal attention and advocate for underserved campuses to hear from a wide variety of college representatives.
- **Increase sustainability initiatives across District schools and allow students to implement recycling programs at their schools.** The SAC expressed an interest in



formal programs that would encourage “green” practices and allow them to recycle and work toward sustainability.

## **Next Steps**

SBOE will introduce a ceremonial resolution to honor members of the SAC at its May 2018 public meeting. SAC members will also have the opportunity to present their accomplishments to the Board at this time, and the SBOE will share this report with DC Councilmembers on the Education Committee. The SAC is hopeful that its opinions will resonate with education decision makers and that the city will continue to make progress on educational equity and opportunity. SAC members who are members of the classes of 2019 and 2020 also look forward to continuing their hard work in the next school year.

SBOE Board members and staff hope to have another representative, engaged SAC for the 2018-19 school year. To that end, SBOE staff members Matt Repka, Dyvor Gibson, and Miguel Aguero embarked on a second tour of District high schools. They dropped off flyers alerting District students to the application for Student Representative and Student Advisory Committee member. Between new applicants and returning members, SBOE hopes to have another group of amazing student leaders on its 2018-19 SAC.

## **Member List**

The members of the 2017-18 Student Advisory Committee are:

### *Leadership:*

Tallya Rhodes, HD Woodson High School, Class of 2018 - SAC Co-Chair  
Tatiana Robinson, Ballou High School, Class of 2019 - SAC Co-Chair  
Natalie Seablom, Woodrow Wilson High School, Class of 2018 - Recruitment Chair  
Menkhu-ta Whaley, Thurgood Marshall Academy, Class of 2018 - Social Media Chair

### *Committee Members:*

Janae Chambers, Friendship Collegiate Academy, Class of 2018  
Aaliyah Dick, Woodrow Wilson High School, Class of 2019  
Hannah Dunn, Woodrow Wilson High School, Class of 2019  
Ayia Evans, Benjamin Banneker High School, Class of 2018  
Aniyah Fields, Thurgood Marshall Academy, Class of 2018



Jerome Foster II, Washington Leadership Academy, Class of 2020  
John Carlos Garcia, Capital City Public Charter School, Class of 2018  
Dwight Harris, Ballou High School, Class of 2018  
Davine Holsey, HD Woodson High School, Class of 2018  
Nathaniel Hutton, The Lab School, Class of 2018  
Daishai' Kyle, Thurgood Marshall Academy, Class of 2018  
De Jesus Ray Vincent Lagman, Benjamin Banneker High School, Class of 2018  
Emilia Majersik, Woodrow Wilson High School, Class of 2018  
Agustin Pereira Martinez, School Without Walls, Class of 2018  
Charley Mestrich, School Without Walls, Class of 2018  
Chandler Nutall, School Without Walls, Class of 2019  
Emma Quigg, BASIS DC, Class of 2019  
Daniel Osmin Rodriguez, Benjamin Banneker High School, Class of 2019  
Diana Shea, BASIS DC, Class of 2019  
Jasmin Woodruff, Benjamin Banneker High School, Class of 2018  
Georgia Woscoboinik, Woodrow Wilson High School, Class of 2018

