

# HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS TASK FORCE

## #DCGRADREQS

Meeting 4  
September  
26, 2017

**SBOE**



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
STATE BOARD OF  
EDUCATION

# STUDENT FOCUS GROUPS

The High School Graduation Requirements Task Force held 7 focus groups. In these groups, we spoke with 65 current students and 2 graduates, representing 14 different District schools.

## Schools represented:

- Anacostia High School
- Ballou High School
- Ballou STAY High School
- BASIS DC
- Capital City Public Charter School
- Dunbar High School
- Friendship Collegiate
- Friendship Tech Prep
- H.D. Woodson High School
- McKinley Tech High School
- Roosevelt High School
- Washington Latin
- Washington Leadership Academy
- Wilson High School

# STUDENT FOCUS GROUP - QUOTES

“I think a HS diploma means a gateway to endless possibilities you can do – it means to me that it’s another step in the staircase to your success” – **Friendship student**

“[Community service is] a burden...if it wasn’t so much or if it was more fun, it would be more meaningful and impactful.” – **Wilson student**

“I think it’s a necessity; people need to understand that having humanity and being able to look at your community and want to fix something that’s wrong, that’s a necessity that people should be part of it. But I don’t think that forcing someone to have community service hours teaches them anything, all you’re doing is forcing them to want to graduate.” – **Washington Leadership Academy student**

“You have different students in each school, we had predominantly African American, so why not teach African American history or the Harlem renaissance, something that will tie to who you are, I don’t want to learn about something pointless.” – **Dunbar graduate**

“A finance class is really important – kids don’t know how to manage their money.” – **Friendship student**

# STUDENT FOCUS GROUP TAKEAWAYS

## 5 Big Takeaways:

- Students find the graduation requirements too restrictive
  - Many students noted that they know what they're passionate about and want more time to explore these passions
  - Students do not want to take 4 years of science, SS, math, and ELA
- Students feel that graduating is an accomplishment but may not be enough to find a job
- Students wanted to change the art, language, and music reqs
  - Students wanted them to be considered as electives
  - Students wished for expanded art, language, and music offerings
- Students are very interested in classes that teach "life skills"
  - Cited examples included: financial literacy, cooking, child care
- Students value community service, but 100 is too many hours

# PANELIST BIOS

**Tisa M. Holley is a proud alumna of Florida A&M University (Tallahassee, Florida) and Regent University (Virginia Beach, VA). She has taught many subjects, been a K-12 school counselor, and served as an assistant principal for grades 7–12. Ms. Holley now works at Friendship Collegiate Academy as the lead school counselor.**

**Leslie Sargent is in her 10<sup>th</sup> year as a school counselor at Woodrow Wilson High School. She has served all grades and is currently a 12<sup>th</sup> grade counselor. Sargent is a graduate of the University of Kansas (BA) and Howard University (MA). She is a 20 year resident of Washington, DC.**

**Jessica Schimmerling is in her 8th year as a School Counselor at Anacostia High School. She currently has 10th and 12th graders on her caseload. Jessica earned her BA in Psychology and MA in School Counseling at George Washington University.**